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PILGRIM PAPERS

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PILGRIM PAPERS

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Devotional.

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"THE PERPETUAL SACRIFICE."

Verse.

"SONGS OF THE NARROW WAY."

PILGRIM PAPERS

FROM THE WRITINGS OF FRANCIS
THOMAS WILFRID, PRIEST

BY

ROBERT KEABLE



LONDON

CHRISTOPHERS

22 BERNERS STREET, W. 1

First Published in 1920.

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*“ Friend, of my infinite dreams
Little enough endures ;
Little howe'er it seems
It is yours, all yours.*

*“ Fame hath a fleeting breath ;
Hopes may be frail or fond ;
But Love shall be Love till death,
And perhaps beyond.”*

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON.

(By permission of Mr. John Lane.)

FOREWORD

THERE were few, it is certainly fair to say, who knew Francis Thomas Wilfrid, of the Mission, as I knew him, and that very knowledge embarrasses me not a little in writing any sort of foreword to these Papers. He confided them to me just before the end ; and now that his day is done, and he will never speak or minister upon the Berg again, I feel that the time has come to make them public. These that he called therein " letters " were written chiefly on the last of his journeyings, as I know to my sorrow, for some, indeed, pencilled on scraps of paper in hut or camp, have been none too easy to decipher. To whom they were written was his secret, and is now mine. They are presented here substantially as he wrote them, and if I have deleted a sentence in one or two, he would not, I am sure, feel that I had done wrong. Such sentences seem to me, as I read them now, of too intimate a character for

the general public ; but I have not removed every personal touch.

For it is by something of which that personal touch is a symbol that I think he would wish to be known or remembered. Wilfrid had many faults in his ministry, faults which, indeed, he often deplored most deeply when he and I were alone, and of which I knew him to be very conscious when he knelt in the presence of Almighty God. He was erratic, hasty, too easily moved, and hardly ever steadily persistent enough in routine work to make a successful priest. But he was at least intensely sincere, and the natives, to whom he was called more especially to minister by the nature of the district, had a real place in his affection. He ever went to the altar bearing them in his heart as the high-priest of the old Law carried the names of the children of Israel on the golden and jewelled breastplate. And as for the Europeans, to whom he was mostly an eccentric enigma, it may certainly be said that he never regarded them as they too often thought he did. He despised no man's faith, if it were genuine ; he resented no criticism, if it were just ; but he

found ignorant and bigoted hostility very hard to bear. Towards that he exhibited, more unconsciously than consciously it is true, a certain only half-veiled contempt, for which he himself was sincerely sorry again and again. He would say often in self-rebuke that under no circumstances should a Christian ever be contemptuous of any one, that of all things contempt was most foreign to the mind of God.

Thus, then, he was eager for friendship, intensely eager, and he rarely found it. If sympathetic understanding were offered to him in any measure he responded, if anything, too readily, and in consequence laid himself open to more than one rebuff. But his longing to receive and to share human intimacy was the best thing in him, and it finds illustration in the occasional heart to heart language that I have spared in these letters. "Tread softly," he would doubtless have me quote, "for you tread on my dreams."

This correspondence (if it should be so called) is, indeed, largely of the stuff of which dreams are made; but I trust no reader will lightly dismiss the substance of many of these Papers

on that account. Thinking them singularly appropriate for more reasons than one, I have ventured to preface two lovely little verses by Mr. Arthur Christopher Benson, now Master of Magdalene College in the University of Cambridge. For there may be reality in dreams, and there are dreams of reality. In Wilfrid's letters I detect a good deal of both. At any rate, he sacrificed his life to his dreams, and a man can hardly set higher attestation than that to his faith that they are true. If too little endures of them, does he not herein offer all that there is to his friend ?

But, even considered as letters, it is plain to me that these are largely dream-letters, for they were not despatched through the post as they now stand and as Wilfrid committed them to my care. "Here," he said as he gave them to me, "read these, will you ? and edit them one day if you like. Say that they have indeed been written on the face of the Berg, the old Berg that has claimed the best part of my life ; that they are true enough pictures of work and journeying there ; and that I publish them because I want to make an apologia and have

no wit or learning to do it as some of my masters have done. They show what I thought and tried to do, and maybe, if you can arrange to print them, they will at last reach their destination. For, since they deal with heartfelt things, why should not heart cry to heart across a world?" I think it better not to write down all that I suppose him to have meant by that rather strange conclusion; besides, quite possibly that, too, was part of a dream.

His words, however, when it is noticed how often they are repeated by him, suggest a title that I rather fancy he may have designed for this book. It is pre-eminently a book of "The Face of the Berg." But it is still more the book of a man, a personality, and I have preferred to indicate that that man was on a pilgrimage in more senses than one. How far he travelled as some may think God wished him to travel I shall not venture an opinion here, but I feel his descriptions of that journey are better called "Pilgrim Papers."

Still it is, I think, open to me to say this: that I can quite understand how he came to dream such letters on the face of that mighty

Berg, whose world-message has not been attempted, so far as I know, before. Nothing more suggestive of reality as commonly understood can well be imagined than those wind-swept, sun-kissed, often snow-washed krantzes that tower up 10,000 feet and more towards God. It is no easy thing to travel on them. The stones of their poor and winding paths; their hardy, bleak clusters of reeds, thistles, mountain-grass, and scrubby bush; their fierce sun, blistering wind, and bitter cold in quick succession; the rough living and primitive passions of the folk who shelter on them—all these are realities of earth, beyond doubt. Wilfrid was conscious enough of them, as his letters show, and yet it was there that he felt so keenly the mantle of the world intangible. And no wonder, for the very openness of the smile of some sunlit valley, or the stillness of some mist-wrapped peak, or the expectation that seems written on the great grass plains, reaching up in every flower and blade to Him Who bade them be, had but one meaning to the man who spent so much time there. "We are," he said to me once, "waiting in an antechamber, and

there is silence among those that know, for they suspect that the curtain is about to be pulled aside, and that the Presence will step out among them."

Wilfrid longed, I know, for the drawing of that curtain while he was on the Berg, and more than expected that he would resolve the mysteries of the Presence Chamber at the very least. An early letter expresses, with pathetic confidence, that hope. And he learned much, it is true, enough, indeed, to conceive himself justified in taking a step indicated here. But at the end he expressed to me his conclusions characteristically, and in a moment of farewell that I am not likely ever to forget. I had gone out alone from the homestead in East Griqualand to meet him, and we were standing in the dying day on the edge of a little green acacia spinney where a path ends at a gate so set that a watcher may see afar off the sunset lights on the great Basuto peaks. Wilfrid stood long gazing at them, and then turned to me with rather a wistful smile. "The grand old Berg," he said, "has chiefly taught me, after all, *how to wait.*"

He was right. At the very best we see through a glass darkly, till the day break and the shadows flee away.

R. K.

SOUTH AFRICA,
1920

PILGRIM PAPERS

I

OF TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING

SOME people like journeys on the edge of things and into the unknown, and some people do not. I am one of those who do, and I find also a dreadful amusement in travelling with those who do not. So I could hardly fail to enjoy, my dear, this first stage towards the Berg.

We left the city fairly early—at half-past seven—in a little composite train of coal trucks and live-stock waggons and passenger coaches, in which the greater number of us were natives. It was a perfect day, with the sun golden on the new-washed trees and fields, and we meandered slowly across the heart of Natal. At first Indian houses seemed to be everywhere, and Indian women, in their highly coloured wraps, were gay on the tiny stations and in the little settlements set among market gardens and wattle plantations. But as the proportion of veld to cultivated lands grew, and as we climbed over kopje

after kopje, each a little higher than before, the native huts increased. Towards midday we were among the mountains, stretch on stretch and fold on fold, great grassy slopes and stone-strewn summits, with the white clouds chasing each other across them. Then not only were there natives, but natives to whom dress regulations became increasingly unimportant.

Alas that they do not become entirely so! A Zulu girl, her little fringe of beadwork about her waist, but otherwise naked and unashamed, who stands and looks at you straight as a lance and fearlessly, is a beautiful creature, but a girl in a ragged, dirty skirt that ends half-way to the knee, with a piece of old sacking pulled up to her throat and tied behind her neck like the top half of an apron, is neither decent in the conventional sense nor beautiful. Really the whole thing is an amazing comment on our civilisation. They accuse missionaries in the books of dressing up the savage, and we have been, I suppose, dreadfully to blame, but, after all, missionaries do dress their people more or less decently, and if the garments lack artistic merit, that is merely due to the fact that so few really pious missionaries have any sense of the beautiful. Their minds are astonishingly little. But it is the civilisation of the average farmer and trader and

the petty Government regulation that has dressed these people so, and the mind behind that is not merely little : it is non-existent, or if existent, warped and futile beyond words.

But this is a lamentable digression. I was going to say that we came out into mountainous country that could easily be seen to be a rib of the world and might possibly have been mistaken for the backbone. We wound tortuously up one side of a valley and as tortuously down the other. In one place we passed the back door of a cottage, and twenty minutes later came back and passed within a hundred yards of the front door. Wonderful vistas opened up at every turn, and sometimes one could glimpse the road to the heart of all but untamed hills. I was entranced ; most of my companions slept. Before me a stout person lolled with his head on one side and his mouth so widely open that one could see the stopping in his back teeth. Such is the lord of the world in his off moments.

Finally, after one o'clock we pulled in to the junction and centre of life in these parts. There must have been quite half a dozen houses, and there was a dining-room on the station. After a while my first train went on ; a little later a second departed in another direction ; and, finally, the one passenger coach of the train

destined for me appeared. And thus, then, the thinning of my companions left me with the gentleman who does not like travelling on the edge of things.

He was stoutish, and he opened fire by pulling his ticket from his pocket some time after the train had started and asking me pathetically if that was "all right" for the terminus. I cannot think it was a reasoned action, only just the groping of a bewildered soul after any information. I scrutinised it, and told him that I could see no reason why he should not arrive without further expense if he sat still, but as our train takes four and a half hours (with luck) to traverse forty-nine miles, I told him he must sit *very* still. On that he launched out. He had come from what the inhabitants of London would call the wilds (and in them he had lived most of his life), and he was actually going to the lone store in the heart of the Drakensberg to which I am also wending. But, in his judgment, he had come from civilisation, and was going, he was fast discovering, beyond the limit. It was really hard on the store, where we are all so intensely proper and law-abiding, natives and white men too, but I had to agree with him. He had no idea how to proceed when we reached rail-head, so I explained that somehow we must

get on another stage to the little township and yet another on the morrow to the farm, and that then we must mount horses and climb to the 10,000-foot level and travel two days and sleep out at night under the stars. And he was not at all joyful at the prospect, as I was, but rather he all but wept. Still he was stoutish—perhaps I should say a shade more than stoutish; he was dressed in a city suit; and his luggage was contained in a trunk which, if not big, was at least impossible on horseback.

He collected himself at last. How were we to get over the miles from the station to the township, and where should we eat and sleep? I had not an idea, but I did know that the further you go, the more easy all these things become. It is a dreadful business going to Johannesburg: you must book a place in a train days beforehand, and you must secure accommodation at an hotel in advance (and very likely these days you will not be able to do so), and you must pay; there is no doubt that you must pay. But at the ends of the earth any one will take you in, and every one is glad to see you, and no one is anxious to speed your departure. When I last arrived in London, I could not get a taxi or a cab for love or money, and when I had obtained one by sheer force of arms, I spent a small fortune

trying to find a bedroom ; but I was pretty sure a post-cart or a car would be waiting at the lonely little station under the Berg. They would not be waiting for us, true, but they would certainly be there for the mail. And if they were not, we could wait ; they would come some time.

Well, of course it all turned out as I had thought. We found a car waiting for the mail, and we were run out the dreaded miles in no more than an hour or so. The little town, marked by a few hundred trees on the veld, took us in and was glad, for we were ahead of last week's papers. Incidentally we now caught up the telegram my friend had sent to the distant store eight days before, but that was a small matter. A boy came in from the farm for the mail, and he took out a note, so that in the morning a buggy was waiting. And at the farm was Cyril with my horses, who had come down the day before from the towering peaks that lifted themselves so serenely into the burning blue.

This sort of travelling, then, I love. One never quite gets over the surprise of it, even although it is always the same. In the city you name some place on the edge of the world and say you want to get there, and they shake

their heads and pretend it cannot be done. You search for a map, and as like as not you cannot find your place. Finally you discover the farthest point known to civilisation on the road, and you go to it. And there you find a friend, and a roof, and a meal, and a welcome, and no surprise at all that you are there. I remember setting off to climb Kilimanjaro, or as much of it as I could. I could find no one who had done so, no one who knew what lay beyond rail-head even if one got there, no one who did not think the getting beyond and up all but impossible. And yet when I arrived I found a homestead nearly three-quarters of the way to the summit, with a charming, cultured, comfortable old Hun in a smoking cap and a velvet jacket, who had been there all the time. Possibly there are places in which it would be otherwise, but I do not believe it. I have no sort of doubt that it would be perfectly easy to get to Papua, or Fiji, or Samarkand, or Timbuctoo, if one tried, and that at the far end there would wait a pleasant person, very glad to see you, with a cup of tea and a cigarette.

It is possible that you will feel that this sort of thing spoils the romance of travel, but that is quite a mistake. It adds to the romance; it makes it into a fairy story, in short, for in every

fairy story there is always an old woman by the side of the road or a beautiful prince in a palace to tell one what to do next. No amount of experience makes the discovery less of a surprise, however ; it only gives a pleasurable hope to life. And it is so wonderful to find kindly and friendly humanity beyond the end of all the long roads.

The most wonderful person I have ever met was a traveller who knew the secret of all this. This traveller had just completed an entirely solitary journey (with no more than a dozen " boys," who were constantly changing along the road) up the Niger, through Hausaland, behind Lake Tchad, across unknown Central Africa, down by the great lakes, through German East Africa, to Zanzibar. The journey had taken some sixteen months, and cost less than £150 from Charing Cross to the Indian Ocean. No newspaper had written it up, and no scientific, religious, or commercial ambition had inspired it. Nor has any account of it ever since, so far as I know, been given to the world. And I met the traveller the day after she arrived, prettily dressed and taking afternoon tea !

Possibly this will be a little more than you can believe, but it is simply and strictly true.

If the lady is alive, I hope she will pardon the liberty I take in writing of her, for I must tell you that she was an ordinary person, with quite a small income, who was suddenly released from home ties, and who there and then determined that, as there was no reason why she should sit at home, she would go afield instead in God's wonderful world. She did not call on Thomas Cook and Sons, Ltd., and arrange her journey; she did not pack all the things she would need; and she did not write to the papers. She simply took a map and decided to walk across Africa, and she took the things she could not get on without: salt, I think, and tea, and some needles, and a sketching block, and a change of clothes—oh, and matches. At Lagos they told her she was a fool; at Sokoto they wanted to arrest her for a lunatic. But after that it was easy, and cannibal chief passed her on to naked savage with the inborn politeness (and superstition) of the raw native. She did not even take a revolver, but, I think, some aspirin and quinine, for if you shoot brother man anywhere in this wide world, it creates an unpleasantness, and you cannot get far, whereas if you heal him, you can go anywhere. Still even quinine is not really necessary; you can heal most of his troubles with a smile.

I think you hardly believe this as you read it, but I assure you it is true. My experience has been singularly limited, but it is just the same so far as it goes. One of these days, perhaps, I shall be able to prove to you that I am right by setting off myself with a pipe, and a stick, and a haversack for Kordofan, or Bokhara, or Honolulu, and by writing you a little book of the ease and pleasantness of it. And do you know what it teaches me? I feel so sure that at the end, unencumbered by any of the superfluities that people take *en voyage*, and unhurried and serene, you and I will set off on the final journey over the edge of the known and find waiting for us a friendly smile and a place prepared.

II

OF THE BEASTS AT EPHESUS

AT long last I am back, my dear, where for these many days I have longed to be—longed to be, sometimes even when with you. We left the little farm of which I have written in the early dawn with the sun still cool, and we rode at first through the lands with the great chain ahead of us, a sheer rampart against the sky. The lands were green with the new mealies, and there was song in the air and almost song in my heart. Then we struck the river, and we crossed and recrossed it, always up and up, through the aloe and the cactus and the sugar-bush of semi-tropical Natal, till the sun beat on us and we grew tired. There was a snake asleep in the path in one place, and only the river made music untiringly. And then the gorge narrowed until the great dark krantzes seemed as if they would fall on us, and at last we were climbing up on foot in and out of the tangled mountain bushes, with the tiny stream plashing and falling beneath them, and far above the infinite blue sky, so seeming pitiless. The last few yards always appear impossible, but we

climbed over the lip of the pass and fell on the grass beyond at last. I scarcely looked back. I felt I knew what lay behind ; the secret of the tangle is hid somewhere here ahead.

Then, after a little, we mounted our horses. It is always wonderful, the first hour on the top of the Berg. The peaks ahead crowd each other in massed armies to the far horizon, and their valleys lie fold on fold. Grass, and grey stone, and blue sky, and a whispering wind—that is all. And so we rode till we came to this place, and Cyril knew that the tiny stony track ran down now 1,000 feet to the river, and that we had best sleep here.

The packs and packhorses are to meet us on ahead, so our preparations to-night were simple. We off-saddled and turned the ponies loose to feed. We collected dried dung, native fashion, and made a fire for the cheer of it only, as we had nothing to cook or in which to boil water. Cold meat and bread, and a cup of water, and a pipe—after all, on a warm, fine evening up here what does one want more ? I smoked while the stars came out. Still far ahead was the purple haze into which from below it appears that one could almost climb ; but the stars seemed nearer. We sat under big boulders just off the path, and the wide valley sloped from our feet

until it was lost in the press of lower hills beyond which the mountains rose again. There was no wind now, nor any sound at all, only the dying light, and the great far-stretching slopes, and the brooding silence. In that silence it is as if one only just fails to hear the stars.

Oh, but I am glad to be here once more! It is so good to feel infinitely little and to lie on the broad face of the wheeling earth powerless and still. Down below people, and sounds, and things jostle, and one has *to be something* to them all. One is always on guard. Even in the streets of the town the passers-by scan one's face as if to read it, and one has to pose. The brain is never still. It hears and questions each sound, and by its servants the senses looks, smells, selects, rejects, accepts, continually. I marvel that any one can think detachedly at all down there. But up here I am nothing—a little stone on an untrodden beach that is just lapped, and no more, by the tide of life. Man in all the centuries has done nothing to change the face of things up here, and it is possible to set in truer proportion his tiny works below. For all our knowledge, for all our binding and harnessing of Nature, not otherwise does the world roll through space beneath these stars—itsself smaller to the universe than even I to this Berg—than it

rolled when the first savage looked out on the night.

It is almost strange, after these weeks, to feel once more at peace. I have felt myself for so long the plaything of giants far stronger and more subtle than St. Paul's beasts at Ephesus, and the horror is that one has to wrestle with them even when tired heart and weary brain crave for peace at any price. Love and religious controversy—they are giants, are they not? Well, here they meet their match. On the face of the Berg they appear as those tiny figures in the lands, who dwindled and sank out of sight as we climbed and climbed and climbed.

It is curious that they should so shrink away, and I wonder why. After all, I still love, and I still believe, and Love and Faith are still the two great facts of life. But I suppose it is the isolation which robs them of their power to torment. We are so bound up down below in others and in affairs that we cannot love straightforwardly or believe straightforwardly. We have to consider what our loving and believing will mean to other people or have meant to them; we have to set ourselves either mentally or in fact against other people; we have to choose and reject among them. We cannot move in any direction without treading

on some one's toes. But up here Love and Religion cannot fight in me except with God, and one does not ultimately, you know, fight with God. Sometimes, in pitiful fury, one strikes a blow at Him, just as I have lost my temper before now with the Berg and kicked out at the turf! But one does not dash oneself to pieces against it. After all, even that would not be a fight, for I suppose it takes two to fight.

I expect that death will be rather like this: in life the clash of struggle, the false proportions, the distracted thinking; all through life the ever more weary and painful climbing, and all through life the growing sense of the slipping away of the importance of the world; and then at last, with the last breaths and the sense that we can do no more, the throwing of oneself down upon the stretch of eternity, and the consciousness that after all nothing matters except the settling of these issues with God and that He is really far too big for the word "settle" to be used at all. And then probably it will grow very dark for a while, only the more dark it grows, the more clear will shine the stars, until they dim before the dawn. And in the dawn we shall arise refreshed and look out on a new heaven and a new earth.

Ah well, it may be so, but the climb still lies

ahead ; this is only the picture of it. It is only that on the face of the Berg one may have some quieting vision of the end. And the vision that I would pass to you is that you must not allow yourself to be deafened or blinded by the noise and the glare down below. Have you ever tried to break through the surf to the broad sea ? If you have, you know that one has to keep a steady head, and not suffer the turmoil to daunt one. Breathe warily ; close eyes as the wave breaks, and open them afterwards ; put power into the stroke at the right moment, and never lose resolve ; and you are through. So it is with life, and with these only two big things that life holds. Why, I have thought in despair that we were doomed to die beneath them, and that the only concern that mattered was to see that one died fighting, face forward ; but I know differently now. A man may win through. He may come undaunted unto God.

Yet of course you must not think that I feel as I lie in my blanket on this turf that I have done with Love or Religion ; on the contrary, I have come here to settle these affairs—if one can ever settle them. The curious thing is, however, that now I can, as it were, hold them at arm's length and look at them almost dispassionately. I feel that here I may learn some-

thing of the secret of both, and perhaps arrive at some definite philosophy which shall help me to be master of them. I want to see if I can get to any apprehension of what Love really is; of how it stands in relation to physical passion; of what one is to do in the dreadful muddle that the entry of Love seems nine times out of ten to make of life, for it will come imperiously in and command (or at least allure) to revolutionary things. Love is such a two-edged thing. It seems to me that more often than not the love of any two persons means bliss to them, but agony to others. If it is so, then this Love is a strange, ravening thing, and maybe our forefathers did wisely to seek to tie it down by conventions and proprieties and shibboleths. But what in the world did they do with their hearts, do you suppose? I think those Victorian folk must have cramped their children's hearts from the start, like the Chinese women their babies' feet, that they should have succeeded in arriving at such apparent placidity. However, enough of that.

And then there is Religion. I have to come to a conclusion in these months, as you know, and it is on the face of the Berg that I shall come to it. I write "have to come," for it is just that. There comes a time in life when one must

act on the trend of the years or never act at all. At any rate, it cannot be right to *drift* into a form of faith, and ultimately stereotype in it from sheer inertia. Better, I think, to act on one's honest judgment and have to retrace one's steps later on than not act at all.

My candle-end is burning out, and I want to make haste and extinguish it. Then the darkness will take me on its breast, and not wall me in as it does with this flicker by my side, and it will seem to me that I am part of the velvet dusk and silence and can swim out on it, even to you.

III

OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

THE day before yesterday I was ten and a half lonely hours in the saddle on trek, and yesterday I did what you would least expect in the mountains—I spent a whole day browsing among novels. And so to-day I have got to write it all for you.

Ten and a half hours in the saddle, without even Cyril to talk to, gives one time for reflection, and yet it is extraordinarily little reflection that I find I can do in the saddle. I must say that I do not think much of that noble beast, the horse, when it comes to journeying. There is nothing more delightful than a couple of hours on a fresh horse for the sake of the exercise, but that is one thing; it is altogether another to have to get somewhere a good way off in the mountains and to have to do it on horseback. My horses are nearly always tired, too, poor beasts. One jogs slowly along, for the ground makes even a canter impossible for hours at a time, and the best pace is one peculiar to our country, a kind of half-trot, half-walk, beloved of the native, which certainly gets one over the

miles, but at some expense to mind and body unless one is used to it. Personally, I always discover in the mountains that I am a dreadfully civilised person. Pace haunts me. I spend the hours unrestfully in a futile effort not to miss the advantage of a dozen yards of flat, and dreaming of motor cars.

But the curious thing is that the day after such a ride I invariably find how much it has done to sort one's ideas, so to speak. On this trek, for example, I rode first across the high plateau, with mile on mile of sparse grass and small rocks on either hand and the great blue bowl over all. Possibly I met three natives in six hours, and I think I saw a dozen horses and a couple of dozen sheep—oh, and a hawk or two. On both sides and far ahead stretched the rounded shoulders of more and more mountains, with great shadows that hinted of the deep valleys between. And then at last I reached the one I was to follow, and descended the tiny stony trail, all but lost here and there, to the minute stream that grew with every mile, and finally flowed into the Orange within a few miles of the store. Hour after hour I followed it, in and out of its stony bed, among the flowers and long grass to which its water gives life, often with the high cliffs through which it has cut its way

towering up to left and right, and towards evening blocking out the sun.

There is music in such a valley, the music of the singing, crystal-clear river, and the noise of little birds among the rocks. Once a wild duck got up from the reeds a few yards away, and now and again the mountain sheep came down to drink. In the solitude one's thoughts wander, and one notices little things and questions them half irritatingly. It is only if I have not to think of the way lest I miss it, as one so easily can, and have not to remember to "push" lest the dark overtake me far from a meal, that I can think consecutively.

Yet, as I have said, one finds in the end that one's thoughts are clearer. I suppose the monotony of it rests the brain. And I think, still more, that to be alone for hours on the breast of Nature, especially in these wild and, on the whole, barren solitudes, is to feel how trivial the petty things are that make up life down below, and to allow them to sink out of sight.

So, then, at sunset, I reached the store. No visitor had been there since I said good-bye five months before, and although there was no doubt as to the sincerity and kindness of the welcome, still it amused me again, as always, to see how

nonchalantly they took my coming. Men who live much alone in these mountains do not run to the windows to see who in the world is at the door, as dwellers in Suburbia do with a dozen callers a day. Mallont was tinkering at something over by the stable, and I rode up and got off and called a boy, and partly off-saddled, before he came up slowly to give me a real grip of a hand-shake and his slow smile. Day after day the immemorial mountains and the brooding silences when the packs have left that ride the wool and grain, and the station is deserted save for the dogs and horses and a few boys, have steadied that man's mind. A man that can stick ten years up here without making a brute of himself with liquor or women is a man. He is rarely a Radical and never a Socialist, and yet it is impossible to think of caste in connection with him. He fights a lone hand. He is master, on the face of the Berg that has subdued the lords of creation these untold centuries. Where the native builds his frail hut and but scrapes the soil and leaves no memory, he takes his stand and wrests his own from the grip of Nature. A curse on your cities in the plain that drag him back in the end nine times out of ten to batten on his blood!

The day after, I rested my pony, and sat in a

deck chair within reach of his book-shelves. There are up here, of course, men who read nothing—at least, not exactly up here, because there is nobody else up here at all, but men in similar circumstances. Mallont is not like that. True, there are vastly more novels on his shelves than anything else, but far be it from me to decry the novel. At any rate, I can always depend on finding the latest on his shelves, and nearly always a book or two as well that I have been waiting these many months to read. So yesterday I lit my pipe and put the tobacco handy, and gave myself up to a long day's browse.

I wonder if you know what it is to "browse." Curiously enough, one rarely does down below. The day is always overloaded with things to be done, and if one reads, one picks up the last novel from the library and reads it steadily for an hour or so. Yesterday, now, I had positively nothing else to do. My body was comfortably tired with the trek of the day before, and my mind had been swept by the wind and the sun. A hundred volumes stood within reach, and I had mood and opportunity to judge and reject.

Among a random hundred modern novels, then, up here, one does indeed reject. It struck me, as I sat there lazily, that a trek in these

mountains would be a good test for the authors of them. I imagine most of them would be unutterably bored and excessively helpless, and would be returned, as from a nightmare, as quickly as possible—to write more novels. There are exceptions among the novels, of course, the exceptions being those which you feel have been written by authors who have seen at first hand some phase of life, and have learnt its grim lesson, and have had to write of it. It is the way in which such a lesson is written up in a novel in these days that is new rather than the lesson itself. If I were to criticise, I should say that the weakness of such a method of dealing with life lies in the character-drawing. It is so often wholly impressionist. The circumstances of life are often drawn in boldly and truly, but the men and women who move among them strike one as distorted more frequently. One side of them is put under the magnifying glass, and the rest diminished out of sight. But there, possibly it has to be so.

The great mass, however, are varyingly told tales that one knows to be but tales. Of such I like best, I must say, the novels that are quite obviously tales, and not the novels that read as if the author were trying to work out the plot in terms of real life. A tale is a tale, and

to be told it need not fight shy of coincidences and impossibilities. It sets out to amuse for an hour or two, and that is all one asks of it.

I read somewhere the other day that this was the true novel, and I think it was the *Westminster Gazette* that described the other as the deadliest form of tract. So the serious novel may be ; but it is also the modern sermon and philosophical or religious essay. Nor can I see why it should not be so ; indeed, I wish those others would call themselves tales and not novels. A man may well write tales to earn his bread-and-butter and to amuse, he being your modern troubadour ; and it is a good calling. But I would have it that if a man write a novel he writes because the Spirit has fallen upon him, and he must needs prophesy in the true sense of that word. After all, it is we professional prophets who have invented that deadliest and driest of prophetic mediums the modern sermon. Those old firebrands of religious history, from the Hebrew prophet to the mediæval friar, did not disdain parable and story, the circumstances of the hour, the tongue, wit, sarcasm, and invective of the people. But the modern preacher continues to base his moralities on the Old Testament stories and the Mosaic Code, while the modern novelist bases

his on the reason and judgment of men to-day, whose eyes look out on the new world that Science has opened up, and on the Divorce Court.

That is the real problem before us all. Is Moses a back number, or is he not? Is Leviticus Divine revelation, or is it primitive folk-lore? It is customary with many of us parsons to pretend that it is both, but I am wondering if we can do so truly. It might be, of course. Almighty God speaks in divers tongues and manners, and He might have spoken through selected folk-lore. But even if He did, we moderns require a modern medium if we are to hear and understand.

The major part of these novels, for example, are of Love and Passion, and they well may be. Passion, at any rate, is a fundamental and universal law—I mean of course sexual passion, the desire to mate. It is a hard law, I think, a monstrous, ravening, horribly subtle thing. Nature would seem to fling decencies to the winds to accomplish that supreme purpose of hers. She will use any artifice, any enticement, to bring it about; she will murder, lie, and cheat to breed. Read Henri Fabre, and see her at it in the insect world; read any true modern novel, and see her at it among men. You know

“Passion and Pot-Pourri,” don’t you? You remember the tale of the millionairess on “One Libertine Afternoon”? “I am twenty-nine, you know . . . we realise that not only shall we love again . . . but . . . again and *again* . . . Love passes away so soon . . .” she said.

Three-quarters of the novels are based on that, and one dreads lest it be hideously true. The man and the woman are kept blind by our slave-mistress until she has achieved her object. They are attracted, dazzled, carried away. They even drag their souls in, and whisper of God and eternity in the half-lights. A far-off gramophone sings to them . . . “*God gave you me . . .*” as they sit out together in the moonlight under the trees, and its voice is clearer than that of God on Sinai. And they mate, and later wonder why. Of course the amazing thing is that no man in love will believe what I have just written, no matter how many times he has been disillusioned; and if he believes it now because he is not in love, he will not believe it as soon as he is. To tell you the truth, my dear, I do not believe it myself. Or do I? I hardly know. Up here, out here, I see the iron law as clear as the daylight, but if I believed that there was no more in love than this, I would

wish myself dead ; indeed, I think I would curse God and die. Amazing, isn't it ? And quite possibly that is all another trick !

But let us suppose, now, that both things are true, that we are animal enough to be in the grip of this ravenous beast called Nature to our own deception and undoing, but spiritual enough to have it in us to love in its deep sense as well as lust. Love is then the supreme achievement of life. Let us not fear that, for Love is of God. We may see and serve God in Love. What then ? Well, Love will be infinitely bigger than the begetting of children, though it may involve that. It appears to me that Love might quite truly not wish that, although it is so horribly hard to disentangle the two, as a consequence, if not as an aim. But is it, then, to be the supreme dictator when it truly comes, bursting through the Ten Commandments of social protection with a snap of the fingers ?

I could feel so. Take the seventh. Here are a man and woman trapped by Nature into a marriage by the false lights of what was passion, but which they once thought was love. And then love and a third enter in. If love is, indeed, the supreme achievement, life for the two is a barren, wasted thing, and for the third it will never be achieved, if they all keep the Commandments.

There seems to me to be only one possible line of thought if one would escape from the dilemma, the quagmire, the very social instabilities, into which the abandonment of the Commandments would lead. It lies in the frank recognition that love won or thwarted, happiness or pain, success or failure, the populating of the globe or the cessation of human life upon it, are but secondary affairs after all. They are so many obstacles in the race, so many temporary furnishings to be assessed at that value. The only object of man's existence will be God. If he put Nature wholly on one side, like the monk, he must do it for God ; if he submit to Nature, he must do it for God. If he hope to walk hand in hand with another towards that Goal, good: let him try so to walk ; but he must remember that to reach the Goal is his object, and not the walking hand in hand, and that, if the latter prove a delusion, he must go on, alas ! not alone, but in uncongenial company.

This seems a hard solution, does it not ? There are moods in which I can feel that it is not as hard as it seems, moods in which I can believe that God alone is Love. Even then I am not a believer that all else is evil, for it may be that we find other things in God, provided we seek Him first, and understand that, if we

seem to lose the riches of life for His sake, they are not really lost at all. But, whatever my mood, I am certain of this—and this is where I feel with your modern novelists and the puppets whose strings they pull—such a solution must have more authority behind it than the unsupported law of Deuteronomy. If I should see God and hear His Voice in my own tongue and age, then would I sacrifice (if He asked it) even you to Him ; but if not, then would I take you in my arms though the laws of Israel and of social England stood twenty times as strongly in the way, though I dreaded lest jade Nature mocked at me again.

IV

OF GOD OR ALLAH

I MUST say I love a few days here at the store. Mallont is such a good fellow. In a way he reminds me of many of the boys in the War, he is so good-natured, unselfish, generous, and straight. We are good friends, and yesterday, when the store closed, we took rods and walked out of the front door to the river, scarce a hundred yards away, to fish. There is a wide, deep pool just behind the house, with high rocks on one side, and I sat perched up there and watched the sunset glow higher up the valley, and the deepening colours, till, as the first stars came out, we walked back. Supper was ready in the lighted room, but we stood for a few minutes on the stoep in the deep silence. There is little water in the river, and it simply murmured through the night as it ran under the high krantzies in the horse-shoe bend in which the store stands. On the unenclosed side the mountain slopes up to the sky-line, and there a high wind was blowing little clouds across the face of the moon.

After supper we sat and talked, and talked

on the big things, too. It's a strange world! Here is Mallont, right out of civilisation, and out of it now for many years, an independent, strong man, not given, one would think, to making concessions to propriety. Yet he is ten times more conventional than I. He accepts the social and moral order, and quite admittedly without what I should call a principle behind it. I tried to work off on him what I wrote to you the other day, and it interested him. But he was quite firm. Leviticus, he was sure, had made a mistake over the Deceased Wife's Sister, and if the Church condemned Divorce *in toto*, at whosesoever's direction, there was a blunder somewhere; but until divorce had been obtained (and it was much better not sought) a woman was apparently the private property of her husband, and mistakes should be endured without rhyme or reason, even to the blighting of two lives.

My protest led, of course, easily to religion, and we discussed all kinds of things, from Confession to the Pope. He is very downright. "If I took religion," he said, "I'd go the whole way. I wouldn't take the Sacrament on Sunday and do a nigger down for a *tikki* on Monday. But I don't think I shall. There is no life in the Church, and it doesn't seem to me that religion makes a man any better. My creed is, 'Do to

every man as you would be done by, and leave the rest to God.' ”

I was silent for a while. What was one to say? It sounds so easy in the theological study, and I suppose the saintly evangelical fathers would have an answer ready. It was the thought of them that made me put a question. “What about sin?” I said. “If you feel it is too great a thing to meet a forgiving God in Communion, what about the meeting that’s bound to come at the end? If He sent His Son and made a plan for salvation, how will you answer Him when He wants to know why you neglected it?”

He flicked the ash off his cigarette and smiled. “I reckon I shall say that *I* never asked to be put into this world. I was shoved in unconsciously, and I found it too big a muddle for me. I did my best; I couldn’t do more.”

Now, you know, there is a challenge in that. “I never asked to be put into this world.” I wonder what you think of that. Again, it’s an easy question—or an easier than the last—in the study, but when a man puts it to you straight and wants a practical, and not a theological, answer, what then? It seemed to me that the great, silent, enduring, age-long mountains all about, waited for the answer. You cannot talk

clap-trap with those listeners. After all, has God the right to make *a man* against or without his will? A man—a thing of brain and nerve and passion, the heir of centuries of hereditary impulse, the sport of Nature, the slave of environment, and yet the restless, brooding, masterful being that is half a God himself—has God a right to make him without his wish, and will He have the right to damn him because he has blundered and found things too hard?

“But you enjoy life,” I said. “Even the fellow most to be pitied rarely wants to throw away the gift. And if he does, owing to the misery of his present circumstances, he would admit to days and hours of too high value for estimation. And if you had a child, a mere baby, and I offered to place ten thousand pounds for it in the Bank, to accumulate until it was twenty-one, would you refuse on the ground that the child was unconscious of so great a gift, which at twenty-one might possibly bring about his ruin?”

“I should not,” he said. “But if the boy inherited a weakness for alcohol, and your fortune worked his ruin, whose fault would it be?”

I fear I nearly gave it up, but then I had an idea. “It’s no answer,” I said, “but it seems to me that what is really wrong with your

question is something much more fundamental than all this. You have a wrong idea of God, and you will think in terms of Law and Commandment and Punishment. Almighty God is to you the unattractive Ruler of the Universe. He is all but Allah. But that is not God at all. God is all Goodness, Love, Beauty, Manliness, Striving, Joy, Satisfaction, Honour, Attainment, Reward. If you could see Him, you would desire Him passionately. It will be heaven to serve Him in the fulness of our manhood. If you refuse Him, He will not damn you; you will merely deprive yourself of all that is fine and good. In refusing God you are refusing all that you like in any man you honour, all that you desire in any woman you truly love. He has made no rigid commandments; He has set you no hard task; He has but given you life that you may run to Him, and He has but set up warning sign-posts lest you go astray."

Mallont nodded silently. "That's fine," he said, "but what would the Church say to all that?"

"The Catholic Church," said I, "is the revelation of God. So was Jesus Christ, and the two are one. In her you can see Him."

"Can you?" he queried sarcastically, understanding only my second sentence, I think.

“All I can say is that the world doesn't see that, and I have never heard the Church speak as you spoke just now.”

And I too was silent now as the minutes passed. Then, with a flicker of passion, “Padre, if I could see God's Face like that, He should have all my strength!” he said.

I looked at him. He has been a brick to me, tender as a woman once, when I was badly smashed up and in agony, a good friend always. He and I know little of each other's past, for men do not often confide that, and possibly we each wonder of the other what eddy washed us into this backwater of the stream of life. So I know very little, and yet I think I judged aright. “Mallont,” I said, “you will surely see Him one day. And then, remember me.”

Across the table he held out his hand.

But, my dear, am I right, or am I wrong, and last, but not least—for it involves honour—am I orthodox? And ought I to sit here in this uniform? Oh that you could give me an answer! There are times when I *hate* these silent mountains.

V

OF WANTING GOD

I WISH you could see me now. I am spread out on the floor of a mud hut, writing by candle-light, and I am going to describe the hut minutely, for I have just been wandering about taking measurements. It's a big hut, round, and five paces in diameter. The door is nearly six feet high, and the top of the roof perhaps nine. The walls are of stone outside and mud within, the floor stamped mud, the roof smoke-blackened thatch and poles. There is no window, no chimney, no fireplace; and no fixtures, except a hole in the mud reaching to the stone, about two feet long and six inches wide, that does duty as a small shelf.

Half the circle of the wall is taken up with grain bags; next to them, on sacks, is a dead sheep, spread out and skinned; next to it myself, also spread out, but on my blankets and valise, and writing to you; next to me are my saddles—my own, Cyril's, and the pack; and next to them is the door, with the grain starting again beyond it. You can reach the top of the wall, where the thatch starts, with

your hand, and this makes another shelf, while the roof poles are convenient pegs. Hanging up, then, or stuck into the thatch, or resting on the shelf, are various objects: skeins of grass rope; a broken knife; a spoon; a Tower musket, very rusty; a collection of my hostess's skirts; an old military coat; two spears; a goat-skin, not very completely cured; a few books, very ragged; empty tins; empty bottles; a few of the same with unknown and unrecognisable contents; a pair of boots; the skin of a dead calf, tied up at the legs to make a sack; a woven grass bag of native tobacco; a gnarled stick; an ancient umbrella; and a decayed toothbrush. And then there is the furniture: a kitchen chair, with the back gone and one leg mended with wire, and a crucifix. This, my dear, is a true, literal, and veracious description of my present lodgings.

In the train coming up I met a man who was deploring the high cost of living. I told him that I expected to live on about £5 a month for the next six months. He hardly believed it, but it is true. And, after all, I wonder sometimes why one does not remain for ever as I am to-night. It is quite as comfortable in this valise on the floor as in a bed; what is the use of a dining-room suite? and I am

as content physically, having dined off mealie-meal porridge, native bread, a couple of chops that Cyril hacked from the sheep an hour ago, and tea, as if I had dined in the Royal Hotel, Durban. Moreover, this hut is quite clean, and so am I, really. True, I could do with a wash, but the dirt is merely clean earth dirt, and I'm shaved. I am, really. I always shave. And if my clothes are a bit old, after all they answer all practical purposes.

Yet I am anything but content in my soul. I have been out, wandering up and down under the stars, thinking, thinking, always thinking, as if thinking did any good. My mind is full of the sort of criticism that men pour out on missions and on religion generally, and I cannot get away from it. I met the other day a man back from the War, and from adventures up and down India, Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. I cannot explain exactly why, but his talk *hurts*. He had seen what was said to be the most debased Christianity in the world; he reckoned the most religious people were undoubtedly Mohammedan: what Christians get up regularly at 5 a.m. to say their prayers? He burst—or tried to burst—a good many bubbles, such as Armenian atrocities, by telling story after story of the thievish, murderous, immoral character

of the Armenians he had met ; and, without saying so, he gently hinted that all religions or no religion were much of a muchness provided a man played the game.

Then the talk veered on Spiritualism and the after-life, which is debated as if Christ had never risen from the dead, with the conclusion that after all it does not matter, for if we rise from the dead, we rise, and if we do not, we do not, and it will not matter much provided a man has done to others—and all the rest.

I wonder if you can guess the effect all this has on my mind. I hardly know how to express it, but I think I might put it in this way. The great religious problem of the world is that modern men believe that they have proved that they can get on quite as well without orthodox religion as with it. A man says his prayers ; he gives up saying them ; and there is no difference. He lives his life ; he has his pleasures, his worries, his anxieties, his successes ; and Christ has no place in them. Your modern man does not want Christ. He gets on perfectly well without Him.

The realisation of this tears me to pieces, so to speak. I ask myself, Who is to blame—the Church, the man, or Christ ? Is it to be expected, and if so, why ? And up against it is

the fact that the native finds a use for religion, and as for me, well, I am a man too, and I cannot get away from it.

The native wants religion. Some say it does not improve him ; some say he wants it merely to get on ; some say he pretends to want it to cheat us ; but all that is rubbish. The last two sentences may be true of some ; the first may be true of more, and even of many in the sense in which it is used, for it comes to mean that religion tends to spoil a native from the white man's point of view : it makes him less subservient, less slavish in his estimation of himself, less satisfied with having small prospects and no racial future. And all power to his elbow there ! I say frankly.

But the native wants religion. A man will not pay, suffer, labour, for a thing he does not want. Not all, of course, do these things for religion, but many do, and more would if we missionaries did not tend to spoon-feed them. And for myself, I honestly believe it is just due to this : the soul of the native is being awakened, and a soul awakened turns naturally to God.

The trouble with your white man is twofold. In the first place, he does few things naturally, and least of all his thinking. He no longer grows like a flower and opens up to the sun. He

starts so as a child, but then conventions, and civilisations, and other people's ideas, and the realisation of his mastery of so much, come in, and he ceases to be natural. If the stars and the mountains and the Spring cry to him of God, he says to himself : " Don't be a fool—remember Evolution, Science, Darwin " ; and he mixes himself a whisky and soda instead of falling on his knees. If he falls in love, he keeps a tight hand on himself unless the prospects are good, and he gratifies his passion in the meantime with precaution. He is born a child still, but he is made a cynic.

But the one thing that might save him is not there. Oh, my dear, why is it that the living Christ, the power of the Spirit, the passion of God for souls, never seize on him and rock his soul to its foundations till he cries out : " Depart from me ! " or else " Inflame me ! " one or the other, but either in an agony ? Why is it that he does not feel the hand of this terrible God of ours in all its relentless power ? Why is it that he does not either surrender entirely or sin daringly ? Why is it that he is such a craven—for it comes to that—such a slave both in his petty sins and in his arm-chair disbeliefs ?

Well, I will tell you : it is because of me, and of such as me, and because we have allowed the

supernatural in religion to drop out of count. We have set ourselves a low standard, for we are content to be saved. To put it theologically, as long as we feel we are in a position to be "justified" at the last day, sanctification does not matter much. We live moderately within the law, and go to church, and take the Sacraments, but we do not fling our whole souls, like reckless gamblers, into the attainment of God. We do not want to lose our lives that we may find them. My friend is perfectly right in a way even over his Mohammedans. There are, of course—I know it—plenty of Christians who get up at 5 a.m. to say their prayers; but the majority do not. We are content if we say them at all. We have whittled everything down to the finest edge of distinction between our miserable Christianity and paganism, and it is only we who can see the line of demarcation at all. The world at large never dreams, from observation of us, that the Beatitudes are the ideals of the religion of Christian men any longer.

We Catholics are worse than the Protestants. After all, Catholicism is far more an obviously supernatural religion than Protestantism, and it is far more other-worldly. It is only a "rational" faith at all provided you accept

first a hypothesis of faith. The Catholic Sacraments are daring and daily claims to be miracles, the practice of the ordinary Catholic faith a commonplace assertion of the reality of the other world. Protestantism might be made other-worldly; it was by the Quakers and the Puritans (although their presentation of things was not a good advertisement of that other world); but modern Protestantism at any rate, with its educational basis of an intelligent reading of difficult MSS. and its Jewish synagogue worship, wears no such dress. I never, therefore, blame the average Englishman for his materialistic outlook, any more than one can blame a modern society child for not believing in fairies and Father Christmas. The Englishman honestly thinks that the belief in survival either rests on a dubious and ancient account of Our Lord's Resurrection, or on Spiritualism, instead of which it rests for the Catholic on the knowledge that the risen Jesus is to hand in the Tabernacle on the altar of every church and has been actually seen in every age, down to last year, by His disciples.

But to come back to my point: I am so dreadfully conscious that I do not live as if I believed this, and that I do not spend my days in a real attempt to see God for myself. All that

abandon, passion, madness, heroism, of the Saints, belongs solely to the Saints. But I ought to show it. Why, then, do I not ?

Ah, the sorrowful answer ! “ Suffer me first to go and bury my father ! ” “ He went away grieved because he had great possessions ! ” Thank God, my dear, that it was not you who had a hand in writing such sentences of doom across my life ! But it is that, is it not ? and with most of us. Do you know, I am so conscious of it up here on the Berg. I trek up and go to the store. I am full of zeal when I arrive. At the store I do not deny Christ, of course, but I, too, whittle things down to the fine edge. No one would call the store luxury, but it is by contrast to this hut and my life in this hut. There I have food on a white cloth and plenty of tools to eat it with, there a cup of tea and a cigarette before breakfast several mornings a week, there novels and a sun-downer and a chat with good old Mallont. It is all *right* ; I am still “ justified.” But then I come out to the native village. I am a priest all the time ; in weariness, painfulness, hunger, thirst, and even boredom, I do serve God ; I become poor and live the life of my “ brethren ” that I come to save. At first I have to make an effort to do it, and then it fits like a glove. And then—well, and then I have

to trek away from the Berg, and I get down to the fine edges again, and, God forgive me, I am glad. That's the rub: *I am glad*. You see, there is no stuff of saintship there.

The other day I debated with Mallont whether the "sporting parson" did more good than the other sort. Of course it was an absurd debate, for Mallont could take no real part in it, having never met the other sort of parson that I had in my mind. I suppose he has met rather reserved, gentlemanly, conventional English curates, but I do not mean them. From his point of view, then, the sporting parson won every time. He gave me a dozen stories of such men whose cheeriness and good comradeship, coupled with genuine religion, had made men feel in club or bar that the Church had grit and manliness, that it was not an affair of stage curates and Mothers' Meetings, to be precise. He maintained that all that was to the good, and so it is up to a point. But is that the Church? Do you suppose that the Apostle Paul, or Simon Stylites, or Francis Xavier, or the Curé d'Ars made men feel that the Church was cheerful, companionable, manly? It seems to me that they made them feel very differently towards it—either that it was a great Enemy that the World should crucify or the Gate to

that Lord for Whom one would gladly be crucified.

And, of course, although I am not going to labour the point, the Catholicism of modern Rome, or any form of the Christian religion that is approximately like it, comes nearest to-day to doing that. It is curious, too, that I put down the four saints above exactly as they struck me at the moment, types of that extravagant abandonment of everything for God that is saintship. And the last two of that spiritual brotherhood are Roman Catholic, and the first two are ——

Of course, if you finish that sentence, you tend to settle a big question, but even so it leaves me with my main argument, that men to-day do not want God because so few of us, even Catholics, are those living epistles of Him that St. Paul talks about.

VI

OF A SUNDAY IN THE MISSION

THE river flows very swiftly round great boulders at the foot of a mountain, and you cross the swirling water, pick your way round a shoulder, climb over a little crest, and find yourself on a plateau in a cleft that is cut out between two foot-hills of the mountain itself. Is that at all clear? I suppose it is not, but let me put it this way. If you stand at the little church door, you look out on a sloping but comparatively flat plateau with exactly six houses scattered about, anything from one to three hundred yards from you. From your feet the slope runs down to a tiny stream, very gay with gladioli and other wild flowers in summer, that rushes swiftly down and down to the wild river below. Left and right of the plateau the hills rise sharply up and close you in, but they themselves are only spurs thrust out from the mountain mass. Behind, a valley rises ever more steeply out of sight. In front, across the river, is a great chain of mountains that runs north and south and hems you in, but gives you a wide-stretching view first. Six houses and the little

church—that is all. Even with a glass you can hardly see more villages, but at sundown there are thin wisps of blue smoke rising in pillars against the rocks and grass from the hidden clusters of huts all the way along the range before you.

Yesterday was Sunday, and such a day! I finished by baptising twenty-six babies at a service that would have taken a bishop's breath away. Really I had done my best to get it properly arranged, and the bewildered catechist did present me with some pages torn from an old exercise book on which were written up and down, more or less unintelligibly, the names of parents, villages, babies, and sponsors; but he had allowed every one to crowd into the church, and I could not sort out the babies from the other children, or arrange the godparents handily, or anything else. I did try. I clamoured for the first father whose name appeared on the paper, and several took up the cry till we were told that he was dead. I queried the second baby's name, which was put down as "Idlet," and got them to let me choose a Christian name, and I refused point-blank to baptise a boy Abednego. But after that I gave it up, and began. I was hot and tired and a bit angry, until in the middle of the actual chris-

tening I had a sudden vision of the beauty of it all. There was the mud and stone church, with its mud altar in the apse, with crucifix and two candles and nothing else at all, for we have no frontal or hangings or pictures here, owing to the difficulty of getting them up. On it was a tin wash-hand basin full of water, and behind some sacks of Kaffir corn and a huge pile of yellow mealies, harvest-festival offerings. The harvest was months ago, and the grain was not there to decorate the chancel, but just because it was not yet sold, and there was nowhere else to put it. All about me, crowding up the apse, were mothers and howling babies, some being suckled, some naked, some clothed; and all about the mothers, and absolutely packing the church, were the people of the congregation. I stood there baptising; Cyril held my book; another the basin when the child was a bit too big to lift; and the catechist called them up, fluttering his absurd sheets of paper. There was not one single scrap of propriety or ecclesiasticism or decorum about it. Babies were thrust at me; and I seized them, baptised them, and handed them back. We disputed about names and ages during the service, just as the need occurred. Ever the packed mass hemmed us in. And yet, as I say, I had that vision in the middle of it all,

and I felt like a primitive apostle in the catacombs and a father among his simple, homely people.

The Prayer Book? No, I fear you would not have recognised it. Do you think I could possibly have begun, "Dearly Beloved, forasmuch . . ." and so on? No, I just began like this: "Now then, my people, be quiet, all of you. What have we come here for to-day? eh? What? Come on now, somebody tell me." (A voice from a big fellow holding a baby) "To wash our children from their sins, O Father."

"Quite right, and mind you pray for them all the time, and now I will get on with it."

The babies made too much noise for any one to hear many of the prayers, but, to my surprise, they all took up the sponsors' answers and thundered them like a ragged roll among the hills, and they all recognised the ritual. Each little group murmured fervent "Amens" as their babies were "washed." And when the last was done, I said—or almost shouted—"Now then, kneel down, all of you! One 'Our Father' and one 'Hail Mary' for the babies, and the 'Divine Praises' in thanksgiving, and I will give you the Blessing."

The offering at Baptism is conventionally a shilling. One man hesitated before he paid me

for his two kiddies and demanded : " What do the people give down in the lowlands where the father lives ? "

" One shilling each child," said I.

" Yes, but the father has come four days' journey to reach us. Will he please take this ? " he answered, and put two half-crowns into my hand.

I am utterly ashamed that I let the natives get on my nerves so often and irritate me, or that I lie in my blankets at six in the morning and dread getting up, for really, at bottom, this is just an example of their simplicity and guilelessness. Cyril was selling crosses and medals outside the church at midday, and when he came to me, and I counted up what remained, I found he had given me three shillings too much. " What's this, Cirili ? " I asked. " From whom hast thou been stealing three shillings ? "

He smiled, and proceeded to lay out the coins. " This shilling, Father," he said, " is from a man to whom the father sold a cross at Christmas last year, and he had no money then ; two *tikkis* from two women who took medals and had no money last time the father was here (five months before) ; and eighteen-pence for a rosary which a woman took who is now dead, and she left the money with her husband." Now I

had completely forgotten to whom I had given credit, or, indeed, that I had done so at all. There is such a rush during the few days I can be here that I do forget these things. And can you beat this for simplicity and honesty?

Or take another incident. As I got to the church door in the early morning I found two women sitting at it with black handkerchiefs embroidered with a large white cross on their heads. One had come two and a half hours to be there. I remembered them, penitents, to whom I had assigned this penance. I asked for the book and saw their record. Sunday by Sunday all through the winter, in snow and frost and wind, they had been there at the church door in accordance with my direction. Mind, that penance was a real shame to them. Is not this penance?

Or again, after the Baptism, I sat outside in an old Burberry and heard cases. The childlike simplicity of them passes words. A father brought his daughter, who had run off to a circumcision school and came weeping. This man had "stolen" a girl—which means run off with her before the cattle were paid—and came to tell me so and get his punishment. This couple had a daughter-in-law married to their

son, and after one month ("It was only *one* month, Father") he died of the sickness; couldn't they marry her to his brother? There was a baby coming, and if they sent her back, they lost the cattle they had paid, and they had no more to buy a wife for the next son, the brother. Also she could only marry the brother by native law, as I well knew. But I could only give one possible judgment. They shook their whitening heads: the law of God was a hard, hard law.

I was glad then that I had spoken as I did at mass. Such a mass! There were sixty-three confessions to hear first and sixty-three communions to give, and the little church was packed in one big jamb with many more outside. Where they all come from, I never can imagine. The service would have sent a ritualist off his head. Cyril led them in prayers, while I said the Preparation and Introit with the catechist. Then I thought they had better have the Ten Commandments to-day (you see, I had heard sixty-three confessions); and so I said, turning to them, "I'm going to read the Commandments to-day. Mind you join in the responses." Then I read, not your Prayer Book Commandments, but the Commandments truly in the vulgar tongue, such as "Thou shalt work six

days, but keep Sunday and Holy Days holy to God," and so on.

Collect, Epistle, and Gospel—well, it was a Sunday after Trinity, and, to be honest, I did not think the poor souls would understand much of St. Paul to the Romans or find the Collect very helpful. Besides, they only have mass about three times a year. So I said a votive mass of the Blessed Sacrament, which is simple, especially as I explained Epistle and Gospel after or before reading them. And then the Creed, for we want our heathen to hear the Creed, and then I preached.

I said they had come to renew the Covenant which God had made with them in Baptism. In Baptism they had been made His, put under His law, welcomed to His love. Basutoland was no longer their country, for their land was Heaven; we were neither Basuto nor English, but Catholics. They had given up heathenism and its customs and laws and taken God's, and in return He had made them His Children and People. Their lips had consented to that agreement. And now Jesus was coming to them, and He would say, "Do you still mean all you said? Then see, I seal your lips with My Blood, and I give you My Body as a sign that I trust you and accept you."

Then I told them to watch while I made the oblations, and while they sang a well-known hymn to Our Lady I offered the bread and the wine and water to God. Then Cyril led them in prayers, till I cried the age-long "Lift up your hearts" as Paul cried in Rome, or Augustine to his first English converts. They all sang the "Holy, Holy, Holy," and the "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord," and by this time I was naming the majesty of apostles and martyrs in the Canon, all but silently, of course. But I heard Cyril's whisper: "Bow your heads! He is coming!" and then, as the bells rang thrice and thrice again, "Jesus is here—His Body and His Blood lie on the Altar!" And then, while I prayed on and on, remembering Abraham, Melchisedec, and Abel, praying for the Christian dead, begging that we might be included among the triumphant virgin saints, and finally breaking the unbroken Body and mingling the cup of sacrifice, Cyril led them again in the simple prayers I have taught them:

“ O good Jesu, I believe that Thou art here ;
O good Jesu, I worship Thee in the
Sacrament ;
O good Jesu, have mercy on me ;
O good Jesu, forgive me my sins ;

O, good Jesu, receive my soul in the hour
of my death ” ;

and so on.

At the Communion I had that vision again. They crowded up, kneeling all around me, poor, ignorant, rough souls, but understanding only that in some mysterious way I gave them Jesus, the hope of life and death, and bowing themselves to the mud floor as they received. And the packed church sang uncouthly, but so truly, the “ *Agnus Dei*,” “ *O Salutaris Hostia*,” and “ *Tantum ergo Sacramentum*.”

Well, that is only typical of Sundays here. They raise me to heaven, and they cast me down to earth. It was wonderful ; yes, it was. Despite all the weakness, sin, falling away, and so on, which I know much better than the white man who tells you Missions are a failure, it *was* wonderful. But—forgive me—it was not Anglican nor the Book of Common Prayer, nor yet was it the Catholicism of Rome. Both those things worry me. It is all very well, but I *am* a minister of the reformed Church of England, and I *have* sworn to the Thirty-nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer. Well, I do more than go behind them and override them. You say that up here, in these mountains, with a kindly, sympathetic bishop, it does not matter ; but it

does. I have a conscience, and it was I who took those vows. The Church of England may one day be different from what it is ; it may, for all I know, one day be Roman Catholic ; but it is not so now. Meantime I am an accredited ambassador sent out with a mission, and I disown my credentials and have set aside my papers. That, it seems to me, is what Almighty God sees.

Secondly, there are the people. I feel daily that I betray them. They go from me to other Anglican churches, to the denial of what I have taught them, to confusion and heresy, and worse. Only the other day, down below the Berg, I was asked to address a school about Our Lady and the Saints, because at the church the children must needs attend they had been told publicly that Our Lady was not in heaven and could not pray for them. Only the other day a boy of mine came back to me, and, after a mass, came up questioning :

“ Is the bread made into the Body of Jesus, Father ? ”

“ Yes,” I said. “ Haven’t I always taught you so ? ”

“ The father has,” he said ; “ but Mr. —— at —— said we mustn’t kneel on our knee before we go up to receive, for that would be worshipping bread.”

Of course there are far better men than I who satisfy themselves that to go on as I go on is right; and I do not judge them. I think I am learning gradually not to judge any one, however apparently wrong I may think them. Things are too complex, my dear. So with these Anglican priests: to them their orders and Sacraments are beyond doubt, and for difficulties about the Church they are content to wait. Jesus comes to the altar at their word and under their hand, they believe, and that is enough. Well, to their own Master they must give account. I, personally, have never felt this a conclusive argument, and it seems to me that I have been sent to a place in which a man might feel the argument as strongly as possible, perhaps in order more definitely to repudiate it. If any man ever felt that his people had been fed with the Bread of Life at his hands and depended upon him, I do, and such dependent children they are, too. But they are not mine, they are God's, and however much I might wish to do so, I cannot take upon myself the responsibility of shepherding them without authority. I may even be standing between them and God, for if I were not here, that would be one conflicting voice at least the less.

But that is not the point. I told you these

letters would be by way of an apologia, nothing big or wise—for I cannot pretend to that—but still the apologia of a soul. And this is what I would say very solemnly to you, that I fear one day, if I make no move, that I may have to stand before the throne of the Truth having sworn to a profession of Faith which I had ceased to believe but did not honestly repudiate.

VII

OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS

ONCE upon a time a sub-inspector of Government Police, a trader, and a missionary foregathered not so many miles from where I am at present, and, in the course of conversation, discussed the character of the native. The policeman remarked sardonically that a few years hearing cases in the police court gave one the true picture and would do much to correct some people's ideas. The trader said that, on the contrary, he was the best judge, for whereas the policeman saw the dull rogues (who got caught), he saw the more clever (who did not), but that he supposed the missionary, if he kept his eyes open, would see the most clever, because he would see those who set out to cheat God. And at that the missionary upped and defended his people, as he was bound to do, and the usual talk of mission-spoiled natives and "rice Christians" followed.

But it is not easy to decide who sees most of the true native character. Of course the priest abroad may easily be blinded, just as he is often blinded at home. Natives, like other people,

naturally put on their best graces with their best clothes when he is about. But, for all that, it is equally true that the trader has not quite the vantage point for judgment that he thinks he has. He sees the man of many flocks who comes to sell his wool, but it is still true of our Christians, as it was of St. Paul's at Corinth, that there are not many rich. And if they are rich, they are usually feeble Christians, as the missionary knows well enough. Personally, I cannot recall one really rich, faithful Christian on the Berg, by "rich" meaning the kind of native who will get £100 to £150 for his wool at the store in one selling. Then, again, of these, as of lesser customers, the trader sees the worst side. He sees the native when he is dealing with that alien thing money, and when, moreover, he is out to fight the white man who makes, he supposes in his ignorance, inordinate profits. Nor is it always ignorance. White men do make a good thing of trading, and the native has had ground to be suspicious and uncivil at the scales before now. And in any case money brings out the worst in black and white.

On that occasion, however, all three judges agreed in one particular at least, that the longer you lived among the natives, the more you felt that you did not understand them. The

missionary, who had spent sixteen years among them, was as sure of this as the others. He said that some few years after he came out, when he had mastered the language and travelled a good deal among the villages, he felt he really knew the minds of the people, but that ever since he had been unlearning that first impression. He said he had known the most faithful lapse suddenly without apparent cause or any fresh additional temptation. He had heard the most intelligent develop a line of argument and stick to it as perfectly reasonable when it was the most arrant rubbish to a European.

On the sixteen years premise I have not been nearly long enough among the people to judge, but for all that I propose to record for you my impressions. It is now a week since I took up my pen to write to you, and all the time I have been living and moving amongst tiny native villages and the great mountains, without a white man (and he as solitary as I from the rest of his people) being ever nearer than one day's journey. Each day's trek has been really enjoyable, not too long and not too short, but they have been so much alike that I am a little tired of them. Up a thousand feet, in and out and in and out again along and around the

crests at that level, then down a thousand feet and then up again, and so on, two or three times a day—so the survey map says I have travelled. In the early evening one reaches the village for which one has been aiming, and this week I have slept each night in a native hut, and each night in a different one. To-night, as I write, I am all but up on the border. No priest has ever been here before, and I should think, quite probably, no European officials. It is not quite near enough to the border for the border patrol to have passed, and the main Government trail up, between the two nearest "camps" as we call them, crosses the river above which is this village, some four or five miles down stream and quite out of sight. This week, too, is, of course, only one of many, so, although I have not had sixteen years' experience, I have something of which to write.

I should say, first, that I think the native is the most exasperating person it is possible to meet. But he is exasperating for the same reason that he often appears rude, because mainly he has no idea that what you would call rude or exasperating is so. The way he meets you on trek and stops and shouts at you; the way he barges into the hut where you are writing or reading, hat on head and talking loudly

sixteen to the dozen ; his slowness at grasping a new thing and his unreasoning suspicions of it ; his habit of talking at you and over you ; his slow-stare and laugh at you ; his acquiescence in what you say and his immediate doing of exactly the opposite—all this *is* annoying. A good deal of it the average white man never experiences, for, as you might guess, he would consider it below his dignity to offer the occasion for it ; but if it comes your way, you begin, after a while, to see that it is not meant. It comes my way because it seems to me that, if a priest comes as a priest to a village, he comes very simply and humbly as the guest, and as the servant of a humble Lord, and it is not for him to demand this or that, or to isolate himself. Some would call that being a traitor to one's colour, I suppose ; but I cannot help it, for to act otherwise would be to be a traitor to one's God.

I have come at last to feel about natives a little of what I feel about horses and dogs ! That hardly sounds agreeable with my last paragraph, does it ? but it really is. I mean that I love animals immensely, and I always want to treat them as if they were human beings. With my horses especially I feel this. I am always catching myself saying : " Cheer up,

old man! only another two miles!" or "Steady on, young 'un! I can see further than you can up here, and I know that's a bad road." But it is no use talking like that, just as it is no use feeling about a horse as you would about a man. I do not mean, of course, that it is no use to feel at all, and that one has any right to be unkind, but I mean you have got to realise that what is pleasant to you is not necessarily pleasant to a horse, and that what is pain to you is not necessarily pain to him, and so on. He belongs to a different race. His mental outlook is in another category to ours. So my present pony, Yacob, little ass that he is, simply will not let me get off and lead him up or down hill. If I do, he plants his legs on the ground and will not move. It is no use my explaining that it will be easier for him if I walk, or that I prefer to walk, or that I do not want to tire him: nothing will induce him to move. There is nothing for it but to sit on him, and after some long, panting, breathless ascent, if I get off at the summit, he will rub his nose against my arm, as much as to say, "Now, *that* was well done, wasn't it, master?" If, on the other hand, I simply cannot ride him down a stiff descent, the only thing to do is to fasten the reins up and throw stones at him to make him get on ahead.

And at the bottom blest if he will speak to me ! One ought to remember, I suppose, that, if a man gets tired first in his legs, a mountain pony gets tired there last. At the end of a long day if I say to Cyril : " Don't hobble the horses to-night, Cirili : they must be dog-tired ; let them be easy," why, nine times out of ten they will be half a dozen miles off in the morning.

But this is not to say that the horse is not an intelligent and amiable gentleman. He certainly is, but his intelligence and amiability are not those of a man. And it is so, I think, with the native. He is not a European, and the centuries behind him have taught him other lessons, so that your first step towards understanding him has got to be that you must never judge him by your standards, nor suppose that his mental processes will be entirely in line with your own.

Once, a year or so ago, I rode painfully up the last hundred of a thousand feet to a village, the wind cold and biting and the rain coming up. There were a couple of men and some women about, and the women stared a little and then went indoors, while the men sat on without moving. We got off, and Cyril went up to the men. They grunted at each other and fired out questions, and got up and looked at me

and spat and sat down again. I fear I lost my temper. It was six hours since I had eaten, and I was cold and very tired, so I off-saddled my own horse, got out a ground-sheet, lit my pipe, and removed myself a score of paces. There I sat on a rock in the rain and thought evil things of natives. After a bit a man got up and came over to me. He stood a few yards off and stared. Then he said, "Hum-hum!" nasally several times, and finally held out his hand for a shake. I restrained myself enough to take it. Then he said, Would I not come to a house? I said (in English, fortunately, for I was too angry to remember any Sesuto), "Good heavens, man! Do you think I *like* sitting on a ground-sheet in the rain?" And he did not understand, and smiled sweetly, and said, "Hum-hum!" again, and led the way. And then I found that the women had already been removing their goods into the rain to clear me a hut, and that the head man had seen us coming and had gone off at once to find a sheep to slay for me. You see, a native would not have been particularly cold or tired or hungry, nor would he have minded the rain, nor is it his code of etiquette at once to usher a stranger within doors and offer him a drink. But I had not thought of all that.

Another time we had been travelling for hours

and hours without a sight of a hut. I had malaria and a temperature of 103 degrees, and it was raining steadily. We arrived at sunset, at long last, at a village, and I told Cyril we must off-saddle there. There was one man only visible, and he refused. He said we were too near "lands" of wheat, and the horses would get in. We must go on to the next village, just over that rise. We went, and the village turned out to be up half a mountain, round a precipice, and some two miles off. But, you see, wheat lands bulked bigger to that native than they did to me, and he did not know what malaria was. Nor is two miles round a precipice and up five hundred feet anything more than "just over there" to a native in the mountains.

Perhaps I am learning a little. Nowadays I ride up, get off, sit down, talk a bit, and smoke. Presently I am asked to a hut. I long to unpack and make arrangements for the night, but I do not. Some time or another Cyril brings in my kit, or I am conducted elsewhere and find it. Some time or another a fire gets lit, and Cyril comes up and says, "Porridge to-night, Father!" just as cheerfully as if he had said, "Roast duck!" or "Lamb and mint sauce!" And I say, "I think I'll have some tea, Cirili," just as if I had a case of champagne in the pack. With the

porridge he will bring some cold potatoes and some *mafi*—thick, sour milk—very good, or a chicken, with luck, and some native bread. And then I eat, with no regard for the European order of dishes, and possibly I have some jam or a tin of sardines from my own few stores. Afterwards the folk crowd in for night prayers, with howling babies to be comforted at the breast and little herds in skins. They sit on my bed, but it does not matter. And then I get into pyjamas and read Browning, perhaps; and you will excuse me if I think we are getting to know each other that way.

Last night I rolled up at a village where I am well known. A little kiddie in a string of beads (Hesther, aged eight) rushed at me and climbed on my knee and felt in my pockets for sweets. They gave me a marvellously decorated hut, with a dado running round about three feet from the floor and figures in coloured earths above of the most incredible horses, hippopotami, ostriches, and sheep, with a human hand with outspread fingers at intervals. Calendars, four of them, also adorned the walls, for 1901, 1905, 1911, and 1912 respectively. My hostess came in, and dressed and chatted while I waited for supper. I fed on porridge, eggs, bread, jam, and tea, and a dish of cold boiled beans that came

in at the end. Hesther knelt by me during prayers, in a sheep-skin now, very quiet and devout, and my host only spat once or twice on the floor on which I was to sleep. Also he offered me the blanket he was wearing in case I had not enough.

My dear, I wonder if God finds us as rude and as difficult. I wonder if heaven and its ways will seem as remote from our ideas as their ways seem to me remote from mine. But one thing I do not question, and it moves me much to-night. Our Heavenly Father will be so much more tender and more patient with me than I am with them. Good-night.

VIII

OF THE MISSION PACK-SADDLE

I DID not write to you last night, and if you could have inspected my quarters, you would not have expected me to do so. If you had seen me lying in ——— But wait a minute; it will spoil the tale to begin like that.

We set out—Cyril and I and four horses—from a certain village, very much out of the way in the mountains, to trek down to comparative civilisation, a store, and another village. We were not able to start very early because of mass, but we got a good pace on when once on the road, for we knew we had eight hours' trek ahead of us, all unknown road, and some of it across uplands without the semblance of a footpath. And we got on quite well for about three hours, and then the series of catastrophes began.

I should tell you that we were trekking along the very edge of the Berg above Natal, and, always beautiful, it was yesterday a supremely wonderful sight. Natal lies 8,000 feet below, and the great krantzes on the top of which we ride fall all but sheer in some places. Here and there they rise to rocky castles of unclimbable

stone, which we have to skirt, and here and there again great fissures are split in them which run down dizzily to the far plains beneath. Sometimes Natal lies bathed in sunlight and spread out like a map; sometimes—and yesterday was one of the times—the clouds hide it, and we are above the clouds. The solid ground was beneath our feet, and on the right buttress and crest and peak of the face of the Berg, but on the left, so far as one could see, a tossed sea of billowy white cloud. So the world must look to an airman. And then suddenly all that fleecy ocean got in motion. It was rolled up towards us, and came on in great waves of white soft mist eddying round the castles, and washing up the fissures, to spread over every depression on our side of the border. Beautiful as it was, it was a sinister thing. Once that cloud envelops you, unless the road is well known (and even then it is dangerous), you must camp where you stand.

So Cyril and I rode hard. It was wonderful how we escaped it. At times we cut across the top of a funnel up which the white vapour rolled from cloud-land with so little time to spare that 100 yards behind, when we had got across, you could see nothing at all but a white wall. King John and the Wash were not in it! But honestly

it was eerie, that continual rush to avoid being cut off.

And then suddenly came a crash of thunder. We had hardly noticed, but the storm that had forced the mists before it was upon us now. As unbelievably quickly as any one who knows these parts could tell you, the heavens began to break up, as it seemed, above us, and down came the hail. Yes, hail, although it is mid-summer, stinging, biting, freezing hail, and there was little that we could do. But in a moment we had to do something, for a pack-horse, stung up or scared, or both, bolted a few yards and jerked up his pack-saddle, which promptly broke for the *n*th time.

There now, you have it, my grievance, my bugbear, the burden of my lament—the Mission Pack-Saddle. How it came into the Mission I cannot say. In moments of care-free benignity, comfortably ensconced at home, I can conceive that some one was once grateful for it. But that must have been a long time ago, for its pattern is, as I should say, much after the style of those used by Abram in trekking from the land of Charran. It is compacted of wood and naked wrought iron, besides leather, with little hand-screws to work it up and down; and the straps connected with it are legion. My horses,

even in their stable, wear a tired and scared expression, and people say it is because of the amount of work asked of them ; but that is not true ; it is because they know the Mission Pack-Saddle is in the saddle-room next door, and they may be called upon at any time to carry it.

I swore never to use it again the first time I trekked—the time the bags burst to bits and the jam-bottle smashed among my blankets—but I had to, and I got new leather bags—at least, they were not new, but they were leather—and packed my blankets outside. Another time the cast-iron shoulder broke, and we took three days to trek one day's journey. And how many times straps have broken, how many times it has given horses sore backs, how many times it has endangered my immortal soul, I cannot tell you. I hardly dare think. This time, however, it only lost a screw and a nut, and Spider quieted after he had bucked off the bags, smashed the frying-pan, and put his foot through the kettle.

We could do nothing while the hail fell, but after a while it merely drizzled, and then we set to. The thunder had dispersed the mist, but the drizzle crept down our backs, and the hail lay thick and white on the ground, and it was so cold that our hands grew utterly numb. I hardly know how we patched the thing up and

got going again, but we did—with two hours lost.

We could scarcely get along, either. Twice the pack worked loose as a result of the accident, and we slithered and slipped and wrestled with stiff reims, on and on and on. At 6.30 p.m. in an unknown land, and obviously still far from villages or the store, I said to Cyril that we must camp down, and camp down we did, while the night crept on apace and the rain fell steadily.

Oh, I daresay numbers of ten times more heroic people have done it under worse circumstances before me, but that does not make it any better! You imagine it! You dismount in the rain, and take the saddles off. Still in the rain, you select a reasonably smooth piece of sodden ground, and you unroll the wet tent and get it up. You put a wet ground-sheet on the wet ground under the wet tent—the small patrol size about four feet high—and you spread your roll of more or less wet blankets on the ground-sheet. (Remember, we missionaries are not police officers; we travel with one boy and one—Mission—pack-saddle; we cannot keep our blankets dry in bags.) Then you get your wet self inside, and you settle down to a cold, damp supper. A few knobs of cold mutton, some native bread, and water of a thick brown colour,

because the rain had swollen and discoloured every stream, had to content us, and after that I did not feel I could write to you. Instead I crept into the blankets in my riding-breeches and shirt, had one final and comprehensive curse at the pack-saddle, and slept.

What do you say? My dear, do you think I have not tried? The Government has no end of them, but it will not sell, because when the Prince of Wales or the Governor-General or a M.L.A. visits the country they have to use several score at once. They have most kindly lent me one now and again, for short treks, when I really could not stand the thought of the Mission Pack-Saddle or while it was in hospital; but that was for short treks, and I could not ask for one for so long a trek as this. There is a decent saddle, indeed, on sale at a store I know of—a small one, but the right breed. I have often looked at it and longed. But do you know the price? £30! Honestly, £30! A month's salary of a Durban tram-conductor, six weeks of mine! Thirty pounds would pay a catechist for a year, would build the walls of a mission church, would enable me to fit up several schools with the new black-boards and the few desks that they so badly want, and would warrant—if I really had so much absolutely and actually over

the year's working and in hand—my venturing, with some hope of success, on the opening of one of the half-dozen new out-stations for which the work is crying out. Why don't I get a new one, indeed! You do not know what you say. But for all that, if the thing were to let me down once too often, let us say in the winter while snow was falling, and if I could not mend it, as might easily happen, so that I could not get on, and if the snow were to lie on the tops there for a couple of weeks, as it often does, why, then, my loving friends and relations would doubtless put up a brazen memorial tablet somewhere to my memory, whereon would be inscribed heroic words saying that I had perished in bitter weather while doing my duty on the face of the Berg. But you, my dear, would know better. You would know that the true inscription ought to run :

TO THE MEMORY OF
FRANCIS THOMAS WILFRID,
WHO PERISHED
IN BITTER WEATHER . . . ETC.,
Killed by the Mission Pack-Saddle.

But, you know, joking apart—only it is really not joking at all—this sort of thing does make one wonder a little. I do not expect the Government to give me a pack-saddle, for I do

not regard this or any modern Government as identified in any sense with Christianity. The officials as men are very friendly ; the Government as a whole is very courteous ; but they as a class and it as an institution have no definite faith, and are not out here for philanthropic purposes. Nor do I expect most of my fellow-countrymen, here or at home, to give me a pack-saddle, for they mostly do not believe in missions to the heathen, and often wholeheartedly think that the bodies of the suffering poor outside the empty London churches are more important than the souls of black folk who crowd out what churches there are in this land, but mostly have no churches outside of which to sit. Nor do I expect my Bishop to give me one, for he spends his time in trying to administer a diocese financially on a starvation pittance. But I do wonder if Christian Church-people at home have a right sense of proportion. My pack-saddle is only typical of ten thousand similar needs of hundreds of other priests of the Anglican Church who have gone to undertake the Church's supreme duty on the edge of civilisation and beyond, and whose work is hampered, whose lives are even endangered, for less than the cost of that new brass lectern or of that handsome set of hassocks. Of course one cannot

blame the people who give the lectern or subscribe for the hassocks. I honestly do not. But I rolled over in my wet blankets trying to get to sleep last night and thought, for the millionth time, that my old pack-saddle is not the only relic with a screw loose and a nut missing!

IX

OF THE BEST IN LIFE

AT my last resting-place I picked up an old illustrated magazine, and I have been reading it to-day at the midday off-saddle. There is an article in it that interests me very much, and I have read it again and again, although, I confess, with little result. I don't quite see what is the conclusion of the writer's meditations. Perhaps, like so many modern meditations, it is not meant to have a conclusion. At any rate, he is discussing "The Best in Life," and I cannot really make out what he takes the best in life to be, or whether or not—and this is the important thing—he advises you to climb any obstacle and break every convention to get it. "Love and Work contain some of the best in Life," he says, "without a doubt"; but that does not help much. If the best of life is distributed around in that way, and reaches you as a kind of 10 per cent. solution in a number of bottles, it is a poor business. Most of us cannot afford to buy half the bottles.

But you were talking to me once about this sort of thing, and I am intrigued with the prob-

lem. What does the phrase mean, I wonder? Does it mean the best thing that living has to offer, or does it mean the thing that makes one's life, taken as a whole, the best life possible? If the first, then of course the best in life may be some crowning moment or thing long wanted and hardly attained, but gone after the moment, or gone after a while at any rate. One might debate that it meant anything from a first kiss to a first baby, or from the sense of achievement on the acquisition of one's first fiver up to the smiling possession of a considerable fortune. If the second, I should say it varied much with the disposition of the individual. Popularity; the trust of one's fellow-men; freedom to wander at will; a pleasant ordinary wife in an ordinary pleasant home; excitement; cricket; big game shooting; study—all these are things which, acquired, would be acclaimed by some people as offering them the best in life. Honestly it is not an easy phrase.

You remember Mr. H. G. Wells' fine novel "Love and Mr. Lewisham." It is concerned with the discovery of the best in life. Mr. Lewisham thought the best lay in getting on, in making a name, in adhering to a time-table; that ideal broken, he thought it lay in a girl's love; and after vicissitudes and disappoint-

ments he heard his first baby crying in its cot, and shrugged his shoulders at the discovery. The best of life lay there. I think it does for thousands of people. To create the little life, to guard and mould and cherish it—that is their best in life. As a philosopher one may marvel. Nature is an amazing sorceress. She sends men and women out to a colossal struggle in which they hardly survive, and she breathes over them a spell so that their worn faces only smile at last, thinking they have achieved, when they have brought yet another life into the age-long conflict within the vicious circle.

Or I have never forgotten what I still think to be the cleverest and most striking short story I have ever read. I do not know who wrote it nor where I read it, but there was only one idea in it, as there ought to be in a short story. It can be quite briefly told. There was a clerk, getting on for sixty, who, boy and man, had worked for one firm whole-heartedly, ungrudgingly, unceasingly. He had never married; he had never taken what you would call a holiday; he appeared to have no interests outside the office; and within it, although trusted absolutely, he was just the queer, unimaginative, groovy old Tom whom nobody could imagine anywhere else but on his stool. His salary was

enough for his bachelor needs. He was just a bit of the office furniture.

But old Tom had his best in life, for which he had lived and schemed and hoped and prayed for fifty long years, a mad "best in life," without rhyme or reason, of which he could not speak, it was too dear, but for which he never ceased to hope. He wanted to visit San Francisco! He, whose daily 'bus ride was all but the limit so far of his life's journeyings, was at heart a born traveller; he, who seemed the most unimaginative of men, had the mind of a poet. Born in a dull environment, enslaved to a daily routine, he had saved and schemed and planned for six months' riot one day among the colour and scent and beauty of lovely 'Frisco. He knew its streets, the view through the Golden Gates, the sound of the Pacific surf on its shores, the glory of the setting sun across a world of ocean, from the books; and at sixty he saw the possibility of the realisation of his dream. He had at length saved the money; in long years of service he had more than earned six months of leave. It only remained to ask . . .

It needed all his pluck to knock at the master's door, for he never did so, except at regular times. The little old man, once inside, usually so composed and dry, could hardly speak for nervous-

ness, and he only got out his modest request—six months' leave after fifty years' service—stammering, at long last. And his master could hardly believe his ears. What ever did *he* want six months' leave for? He had no relations! Stuff and nonsense, then! six months! He could have a fortnight to go to Margate, but six months! Why, he had always been bored with holidays, and glad to get back if he took the inside of a week. Was he sure he was quite well?

Yes, quite sure, and he wanted six months' leave . . .

But why? Let him tell his master why. Come now, out with it! What in the wide world did he, old Tom, want with six months' leave? Really it had its funny side . . . And his master laughed heartily.

Poor old Tom! That laughter finished him. How could he say he wanted his best in life? How could he say that he, the old crabbed clerk of sixty, wanted to realise the dream of years and go off to—San Francisco! He could not say it, and he did not. He mumbled that very likely the master was right; he'd think better of it . . .

“That's right,” said his master kindly, taking up his pen. “You can have that fortnight

whenever you like, and it need not cost you anything, either; you've been a good servant to the firm. Thank you. Good-morning."

An hour later he passed through his office on his way to lunch and saw old Tom in the same old coat at the same old desk. "Funny old chap!" he mused as the door shut behind him. "I wonder what the old donkey *was* thinking about!"

I have never forgotten that story, and never shall. Maybe the best in life, to nine out of ten of us, is never any more than a dream of which we dare not speak.

But *The Best in Life*—what is it? An hour ago I had almost said it was this off-saddle so far as I am concerned! It does take a great deal of beating—the long morning's ride on a cup of coffee; the arrival at a place like this, a place with a couple of willows drooping over a crystal stream, a bed of rich grass, a rugged old mountain behind, the wide, far-spreading valley before, and the dreaming, cloudless vault above; then the rest as one flings oneself down, and the joy of a pipe, and every care in the whole world banished over yonder ridge, for at least you can do nothing, be found by nobody, and want no more just here and now. No more?

Well, perhaps you will understand if I quote

a "Fragment" of Rossetti that rings often in my mind :

"Who shall say what is said in me,
With all that I might have been dead in me?"

But I can tell you what I believe is the best in life to every man, woman, and child on the planet—at once the best thing life has to offer and the thing that makes life the best to each of us. And it is not really a pious, conventional answer, or not as I mean it. The Best in Life, dear heart, is God. So does Amiel open his *Journal Intime*: "There is but one thing needful—to possess God."

God is beyond words of mine to tell. He is joy, strength, beauty, grace, reward, striving, love, vision, and life. Everything consists in Him, and He is in everything, of everything, the soul of the world. Our Lord said traditionally, "Lift the stone, and there thou shalt find Me." True, infinitely true, and He is in the flower in the crannied wall, and He is in the light in your eyes and the gold strands that run through your hair, and He was in the shining of the well-scrubbed Army pots to Francis in Mr. Benson's story, and it is His Breast on which I lie now on this green grass, and whose Face smiles at me in this golden valley. People won't realise it; that's all. He is not the God they

imagine, not the God of Semitic Commandments and of Jehu and of the late Kaiser; passionately I tell you that. The Old Testament tells you what the Jews thought God was like, just as the Kaiser's speeches told us what he thought God was like. But men have spent their days libelling God. They have thought Him far off and hidden, but He is not far and not hidden. He is revealing Himself all the time, smiling at us out of every beautiful thing, reaching out to us in every noble impulse, picturing Himself to us in every glorious ideal, yes, and touching us with those wise fatherly fingers of His in every pain. Oh, the good, good God, my darling . . .

Well, and God is the best in life. He is the only best. If a man find Him, he has lived; if not, he has not been born. Not that He is hard to find, and indeed He is often enough found of them that seek Him not, and of them who do not know that it is He when they have found Him. But it is He all the same, and I will tell you how I think He is found.

We men, my dear—and I will not speak of women—are a sordid sort of beasts in a way. We very easily do sordid kinds of things, things which a woman, unless her eyes have been opened, finds hard to understand. And, in addition to this, we often have sordid schemes for life, or

allow ourselves to grow sordid in the execution of them.

But, on the other hand, there are men with ideals, and still more men (if not every man) who glimpse ideals now and again even if they turn from them with a sigh. There are men with high ideals of honourable work, even if it be no more than honourable human service, from the scientist who honestly seeks knowledge that he may serve down to the batmen many of us had in the War. Patriotism makes a high ideal for others. Home life makes a high ideal for more, and I have seen a pathetic figure of a city clerk, trudging home on £150 a year down suburban streets, transformed when he had safely reached his "villa" and sat down in his parlour and got his kiddies on his knees. Religion is often the very noblest ideal of very noble men, if the world only knew it, from the Breton peasant, who gives up his life to be a foreign missionary, up to my Lord Cardinal who says humble; childish prayers when his day's work is done. And there are men who look into a girl's eyes and read the highest of ideals there, who kiss the hand rather than the lips after that look, and who would be saints of God if they never fell from what they had seen in that moment. One and all of these men have seen God, God

revealing Himself in many ways, but God, the Soul of the World.

And great artists paint, and know that there is something they cannot get into their pictures altogether; and great architects build, and when they have built, they sigh a little; and great scientists spend their years, and at the end there is a look in their eyes—you can see it always—as if their researches had led them all but into the Presence but not quite; and great lovers—why, they usually die of a broken heart because they have not been able to love as they thought they would when first they looked into love's eyes. And the lesser good, honest, true-hearted men—they, too, are tired towards the close, and usually are glad to go. Maybe they do not know why. But I think I know. They, too, have been reaching out after God, and have yet quite to find Him.

But the search, beloved, is the best in life.

It seems to me that the world is very blind not to see all this, and stretched out here in the sun, I am reminded of a curious little incident of which I was once a spectator. In a big manufacturing town, I wandered into a hall in which a lecture was being given on the evidence for God. A young minister had been piling up statements, all quite good and true as I thought, and was

now summing up preparatory to sitting down. As soon as he did so a workman in the hall jumped to his feet, and dashed one fist into the other. "It's all a lie, mister," he said, "and I'll offer ye the best proof one man can give another. I deny God. But if there is a living God, let Him strike me dead this minute!"

He flashed his hand out dramatically, and so stood. It was, maybe, cheap, but it was effective. A dead silence fell, and a woman near me shuddered. I wondered what the platform would do. But we had not long to wait, for the young minister got up easily and burst into a hearty laugh.

It sounded very curiously in that silent hall, and the workman flushed scarlet. He was about to burst into angry speech, but the minister stopped him and said much as follows:

"I was trimming my rose-trees the other day, when a green-fly on a twig astounded me. It got up on its hind legs and said, in the most curious falsetto voice you ever heard, 'You're not a man! I can't see you, and I don't believe the green-fly when they say that it is Man that sometimes kills us in such quantities. Do you hear?—I hope you do—I don't believe in you! Now, if you're a man, strike me dead this minute!'

“ Well, I was fairly taken aback. I thought at first that I was dreaming, or that I had not heard aright. Then I ran into the house and got some sticks and some gauze, and covered that twig carefully up without disturbing anything, and went out to get some of my friends to come and hear that green-fly. But they only live a few hours, and when I got back it was dead. I suppose it died very wise. I reckon it told all the other green-fly that it had proved it was right. There was no Man, for it had not been stricken dead! It fairly makes me laugh now to think of that wretched green-fly!

“ My friend, it is an insult to compare you and the green-fly, man and God. The smallest bacillus known is a monstrous giant in size and wisdom in relation to a man compared with you and God. Do you suppose that words such as yours would affect God? I tell you honestly I do not suppose He even hears you when you speak so.”

It was a smart answer, but, my dear, I cannot say I like it. I think I would have put it differently. Suppose a father to be at play with his little son, who is just getting strong enough to love to hit out at his father, as boys will, and who is beginning to think he is really strong. Suddenly the little fellow gets annoyed because

his father is such an immovable giant and *won't* hit back. His father is obviously playing with him, he thinks, and he is big now, and serious. He's no baby now! So he loses his temper. "I won't play with you, Dadda," he shouts; "you're a nasty, horrid dadda! I don't believe you *can* hit if you want to! Hit me, if you dare! Kill me, if you dare!"

What do you suppose the father would do? If he were very wise and loving and kind, I think he would say nothing, but just go away. And towards the end of the day, when his little son was tired with playing alone and very sorry for himself, he would come back and pick him up in his arms, and carry him off to bed, and tuck him up, and kiss him.

That is my answer, dear. The best in life is the search for God, and it does not matter so very much if one hardly knows it or does not find Him, for the best beyond will be His Kiss.

X

OF AARON AND GAMALIEL

OH dear! it's a strange old world! If I can set down for you the thoughts that have been filling my head while jogging along all this day over a mountain trail all but obliterated by the heavy rains (so that we had to scramble like cats up rock surfaces with practically no foothold, and make new ways down for ourselves over slithery, wet grass), you will see why I think it strange, and perhaps why I find it to be so very, very old—two thousand very long years at least. But I am not sure that I can give you the impression that is left on my own mind. For it is only an impression, however correct. A few words and an attitude, that is all. Our conversation will not strike you much unless you realise what lies behind it.

We arrived last night at an out-station which I had never visited before. There is a little bare, rectangular Church school there, and a little stone hut, both sheltered under a great cliff of rock and fronting a semicircular meadow that runs down to a stream. The view northwards

is superb. The mountain chains rise ever higher and higher, one running into another, until the black, forbidding peaks mingle in a great barrier upon which rest the clouds. The people are said to live all around, but most of them are hours away and quite out of sight. The church and the hut seem themselves to stand in a vast empty world.

The catechist had heard of my coming, and had descended from his hidden hut on the top of the cliffs behind to meet me. We were strangers to each other, and he eager to see me and eager for what I would do. After a few greetings he plunged into the matter that lay uppermost in his mind: "Had the father come to examine the school?"

I fear the father had not. I try to make a point of talking to the children of each school I visit about the religious teaching they are supposed to get, but the business of examinations in the three R's, which takes a couple of days or more if one does all the standards properly, is not much in my line, and ought not to be, I think, in my province. Here it certainly was not. It was not my school, and in any case I had not the time.

"No," said I, "I have come to shrive the people and say mass." And at that he was

perplexed. He begged my pardon ; he did not understand. I repeated myself, and now used the words "Holy Communion."

"Oh," said he, "the father means the Supper!" And his eager face fell. Now I hardly meant the Supper. To me the Holy Communion was instituted at the Last Supper, but was not that supper, and the Church early distinguished between the Love Feast, which was the Supper, and the Eucharist, which was very soon separated from it. All that I could hardly explain just then, but his use of the word told so much. Wherever you hear it, it means that the people are Protestant rather than Catholic. But I did my best. "No," I said. "I always have my supper in the evening. But I mean that I have come to hear the people's confessions and give them the Sacrament of Our Lord's Body and Blood to-morrow morning."

At this he still looked a little perplexed, but he said he was delighted, and he was sure the people would be. "They must be early," I said, "as I have far to ride afterwards."

"They will be in about one o'clock," he said. "They live far . . ."

And at that my heart sank, for it told me a great deal that the people should be accustomed to come in at one o'clock to meet their priest.

Well, I will cut all this short. As a matter of fact, I could not stay till past midday or go to the altar then, if I did, and I said mass the next morning with only the three of us present, and gave the teacher communion. He made what he called a confession, but it was perfectly plain that what he and I meant by confession were two different things. And as to my mass—well, bless the dear fellow, he hardly knew what I was about. Cyril knew, however, and somehow I had great joy in pleading Our Saviour's infinite merit for that place.

But, once in the saddle, thoughts crowded in my mind. Up in these mountains, alone, among people taught by me and used to me, one grows singularly forgetful. I hardly realise, I think, to what I have half unconsciously come and what a cleavage exists between my work and this of my brother whose out-station I am on. These last three weeks, for example, as I reviewed them in my mind, I began to perceive that I had done no more than administer the Sacraments in place after place—all five of them that a priest can administer. I have been riding around as a kind of vehicle for sacramental grace. A priest who so regards his office scarcely conceives himself at all. It is not my words or my exhortations that matter, not my wisdom in

elaborating sermons, not my job to examine schools. I come, in accordance with the Divine plan, to allow the grace of God to flow through me to these people. My main endeavour is to keep the channel clean, and to administer zealously and correctly. I mean I just try to say my own prayers and to perform my rites as they should be performed. That takes nearly all the time.

Of course I do not mean that I have no regard to the faith and understanding of the people. That would be absurd. But, you see, the whole outlook is different. The people do not gather to listen to my preaching; I do not sit down overnight and make up ingenious and pious discourses out of the Psalms, and so on. I used to do that sort of thing. I would take a Psalm and discover, for example, that the words "Deliver me" occurred three times. "Deliver me"—"from temptation," point one; "deliver me"—"in the mire and clay," *i.e.*, in sin, point two; "deliver me"—"in the time of trouble," point three. On that, with introduction and conclusion and with appropriate illustrations, I would make up a discourse, and we would sing some nice hymns. But now it is quite different. I hear confessions, and try to deal with each soul as it shows, however imperfectly, its need. I

say some simple, obvious mass, like that of the Sacred Heart ; and, crucifix or picture in hand, I point out briefly what is the wounding of His Heart still, and how on this very rude altar in a few minutes the same Christ will offer Himself as the still wounded Lamb for our salvation. I hold up the crucifix between the seated people and their God in Heaven. "So," I say, "Christ on the Cross interposed between the world and God's wrath on account of sin." Then I lift the chalice and the paten. "Here," I say, "will be in a moment that same Christ, and I shall set Him again between you and that same wrath. Not that God is wrath ; He is Love, such Love that His Victim, dispelling the black clouds that gather on account of sin, will once more enable you, the children of God, to see the smiling of the Father's Face."

My dear, my pen has carried me away, but do you see the difference ? I remember once, as a young man, speaking on an ingenious acrostic (the kind of thing we loved) which ran :—

“ J esus
E xactly
S uits
U s
S inners. ”

But do you know I always missed the true

explanation of that second word? He does *exactly* suit us sinners, not because the remembrance of Him moves us to sorrow and good resolutions, not because He did something years ago in which we can mystically and retrospectively share, not as if we were all feelings and souls. He exactly suits us because we are men of minds and bodies to-day, and to-day He will do for us visibly and invisibly, corporally and spiritually, mind and body, in other words sacramentally, what God has ordained as the method of salvation.

Now here you have two totally distinct religions, perfectly exemplified in my little visit to that out-station. For the moment I am not writing to you as to my view of the right or wrong of either, but I do want you to see what I mean. I came thinking myself a doctor of spiritual medicines; I was expected as a prophet. I came to do things; I was expected to say things. I came to work in virtue of my office; I was expected by virtue of my colour and education. I came to teach the Christians incidentally, the heathen directly; I was expected by both classes in the same way. I came as a son of Aaron, a Levite; I was expected as a son of Gamaliel, a Rabbi.

You might, of course, argue that I ought to

have come as both, and that it is the wisdom of the Church of England to keep the mean between the two extremes ; and in the latter matter, at any rate, you would have been right. That is precisely Anglicanism ; that is undoubtedly what my brother of this missionary diocese would say. But I feel that this attempt on the part of the Anglican Church has been a sorry failure, and that nowhere is that failure better seen than in the Mission Field. Here, for example, where the Anglican view has been taught, the expectation of the prophet far outweighs the coming of the priest. And it always tends to do so, because you cannot hold logically and inevitably as a matter of fact that the two offices are of equal importance. If you do, then the sacramental side sinks, and finally sinks out of sight. For if the Sacraments are but means of grace, I doubt that they are such good means as a fervent discourse or a wise examination of children, especially if one has scarcely time to do both.

But if the Sacraments are the actual means of salvation, then the rest is but a secondary help to them. If, for example, the Sacrament of Penance—Confession—is the Divine plan for the forgiveness of sins, then naturally, whatever I do, I must do that ; if, on the other hand, it

is only a help to some people who cannot quiet their consciences, then probably a good sound sermon on penitence and the recitation of the General Confession will suit the case. What doctor, attending a man with a broken limb, would omit first and at once to set it? Necessary as the giving of a good dietary would be, that would be pretty useless without the other. His directions would be secondary and supplementary to his bone-setting. And the bone-setting is to a Catholic the Sacrament, the dietary the sermon.

Now underneath all this lies a much deeper thing, I think, a thing which is the crux of the whole matter. To me it seems that at the bottom of Protestantism is Rationalism, and at the bottom of Catholicism Revelation, however much the one may be disguised, or the other defended by reason. Revelation involves the hypothesis that God has shown something to men which they would not have found out by themselves, that He has committed something to them, given them a plan, arranged a scheme. He has shown what He wants and how He wants it—that is the point; and the conclusion is that this must be safeguarded, continued, and obeyed. Man's primary duty will lie in these three things, and however much he may justify them by

rational arguments, or apply in their working rational intelligence, the fundamental idea is that the scheme is not his and does not need his defence. Thus to the Catholic Christ came into the world and founded the Church and the Sacramental System, that System safeguarded by that Church, to be a royal ladder into heaven. Church and System are something bigger than ourselves and beyond ourselves. There are rational arguments by which they may be explained, justified, and all but proved, but ultimately "The Word was made Flesh," "Upon this Rock I will build My Church"—these are superrational, superhuman, supernatural. It is ours to fall in with them, to serve them. And the minister of such a theory is not only of necessity a priest, but a priest after a certain order. This Divine scheme has its human side, and the human side, because it is human, must be regular, ordered, and in a sense rigid. No man or body can assume such a priesthood, and determine the manner of its assumption. The stone has been laid; the faith has been delivered; the one cannot be dug up and settled down in a new order, and the other cannot be reconsidered and corrected. Indeed, it is of the essence of things that if the faith needs correction, then the faith has failed.

Now, Protestantism, although most of its sects would claim some such supernatural basis, has, in point of fact, relaid the stone and reconsidered the faith. Of course each sect believes that it has relaid the stone according to the since misplaced original, and corrected the faith back to its original purity, but the very fact that such relaying and correcting have been carries with it the assumption of Rationalism. Somebody—some man—judged that there had been a mistake, and that something else was intended. There are about 300 different Protestant sects; that is, there are about 300 judgments correcting what has come to be, back to what it is judged to have been. And the inevitable follows. Luther judged that the original was not what he saw the Church of his day to be, but after another model; it is obviously open to the sons of Luther to judge that he was mistaken. They have so judged, as likewise have the sons of Calvin, Wesley, Spurgeon, Fox, Cranmer, and a host more, of their spiritual fathers. In fact, this work of judging has become the primary work of a Christian. So Luther said, "It belongs to every Christian to know and to judge for himself of doctrine." Thus Rationalism, the application of human reason and knowledge, modifies what is alleged to be the original

deposit. And since admittedly human knowledge is growing, it stands to reason that the dogmas of religion are in a state of flux. In a word, there are no dogmas, which is, indeed, the pronouncement of modern reasonable Protestants. And in the Mission Field, however much with child races we have to be authoritative, our end is that they shall come to think for themselves, and determine for themselves, while our plan of campaign will tend to be moral exhortation far more than dogmatic ministrations of rites and ceremonies.

Of course Catholicism itself may be simply the result of the rationalism of St. Paul, as the German critics would have us believe, or the result of the rationalism of Greek philosophers in the first four centuries, as Mr. H. G. Wells insists. But even so the Catholic is essentially a person who does not rationalise, and he has always done his best not to do so. To-day he acts still as if such rationalisation was contrary to the nature of things, and hence the conduct of the Catholic priest, as chiefly an administrator of sacred rites, in the Mission Field. Catholicism is essentially different from Protestantism because of this point of view. After all, the Catholic attitude has passed into a proverb: "Rome changes not." Driven to explain the

difference between Peter and Pius, a Newman urges development, growth. Driven to defend the insinuation that non-rational beings ought to be in a lunatic asylum, a Benson urges that the rational proofs of Faith are not so much non-rational as supernatural. But, either way or any way, the stubborn Catholic will not admit that his religion is of human devising, and in that very refusal, be it originally right or wrong, he is involved in the consequences of the acceptance of Revelation. He is chained to the Apostolic Succession, and his religion is the Sacramental System.

The Church of England attempted, it seems to me, to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. The Reformation Anglican Fathers rationalised about the seven Sacraments, and decided that two only were of Christ's revelation and thus "generally necessary for salvation." They rationalised about Episcopacy, and decided that the Pope was of human origin, but Prelacy of Divine. Across the Border their brethren rationalised a bit more, and made Prelacy human and the Presbyter Divine. And across the Border back again the Puritans rationalised that no ministry was Divine at all. One and all they were rationalists.

Incidentally there is no greater rationalist

than the non-Catholic, who maintains that the words of the sixteenth century Bible are verbally and infallibly the revelation of God. He is the rational son of Luther. That reformer, declining to believe that the Church was the pillar and ground of the truth, appealed to the Bible or to such books of the Catholic Bible as he himself selected ; but he did not rationalise much about the nature of his new authority. His sons, driven to defend themselves, evolved a theory of verbal inspiration which was neither his nor the Church's, and which, of all theories, is the least possible to-day. Yet such rationalists are they that now the shrinking relic is driven to attempting to prove by ingenious twistings that Moses anticipated Newton and that the author of Genesis was a scientific historian, and then demands the acceptance of irrational dogmas upon the authority of a few specially selected and privately explained texts.

This is a dull letter. Will you even read it, I wonder ? Forgive me. Up and down the hills, plodding along at not much more than a foot-pace, I have been thinking it all through again this morning, and it will out. That poor little catechist on the out-station, how surprised he would be if he knew—he and his supper ! But it does so matter to me. Is it a supper, or is it

the mass? who shall say? If there be no one to say, and if I have to go back to musty books and bewildering histories to find out, I shall cast in my vote for the supper quickly enough.

But it seems to me that there is one arresting, amazing, bewildering, imperious Personality who dares to speak in this world of little men, a Personality that moves with a strange secrecy, and yet may be found easily enough on every highway and in every back lane of the world, a Personality as old as the Seven Hills and yet so radiantly young. If you have not come across this mysterious, wonderful Being, it is almost useless for me to write to you, and I do not suppose Almighty God will hold you to blame. Yet it seems to me that I have been called aside into the garden and have been shown wonderful things, incredible though it seems to me that I should have been called at all, wonderful things, amazing things, supernatural things, things of beauty beyond the glory of sun, moon, and stars, things of wisdom, which I can only see to be very wise, tender things of which I cannot speak even to you. And it is no good—I cannot resist the conclusion. “Never man spake as this Man.” “He hath done all things well.” “He maketh the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.” “He bindeth up the broken-hearted, and He

giveth medicine to heal their sicknesses." Such sentences were written of the Christ, and such are true again to-day. But I cannot understand it; this wisdom is beyond me, this medicine a bitter thing. Yet to whom else shall we go? Here, at least, are words of eternal life.

XI

OF A VILLAGE UNDER THE MOON

THEY always say there is no loneliness like that of a stranger in a big European city in which he knows no one, but that entirely depends on the money in his pocket. If he has plenty, he need not be lonely for long. I have been in a good few big European cities without a friend, and even without much money, but I have never felt really lonely—at least, not more lonely than I wanted to feel and rather enjoyed. The world is, as a matter of fact, superficially very friendly. The great axiom that man is a social animal lies deep down in most men, and a cheerful person can make acquaintances in an hotel, or a bar, or a church, or the street as easily as possible. And quite often he can make friends, and the best of friends, too, the friends that chance has thrown his way, and not the friends who have sought him out because of what his profession may be or his social rank or his circumstances. Even more, they may be the sort of friends one would never make in any other way, and a man may come to see God in the soul of a street-girl, or humanity in the

heart of a capitalist, if he is all by himself in a city.

No, there are many worse lonelines than this, and there is one I am always experiencing on trek and from which I cannot get away. Do you know the cheerfulness of a Basuto village on a fine night of a full moon? The huts lie scattered on the hillside without order, and all opening eastwards. Each household has two or three such huts, often two at least knit up by the big semicircular reed-fence called the *lelapa*, and the little paths thread in and out of the big boulders between each group. The chief will have his big cattle-kraal of piled stones below his collection of huts, and most likely there will be several more smaller ones up the hillside. The sun has set, then; the girls have come back with the water, and the boys from the milking with the brown jars of milk, for you know no woman may milk, or even enter the cattle-kraal when the cattle are there, on the Berg. "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk," says the Old Testament, a piece of sympathetic magic, according to Professor Frazer, which has its like in our modern African custom. Anyway the cattle are kraaled, and within the reed fences the cheerful dung-fires are lit. Cyril has brought me my porridge, and it is not yet time for prayers.

I wander out under the moon, and I feel terribly, awfully, alone.

The air is full of little noises. The cows in the kraal are licking their calves, and all together chew the cud with a slow sound of contentment. There is cheerful loud talk from the chief's house, and the laugh of a woman away up on the hill in a far group of huts. A band of children, the moon shining on their bodies, run out of the shadows and chase each other, then dive in at the low reed doors and cuddle up together round the boiling pot on the fire. You can hear their childish talk inside, but if you are I, you do not understand most of it, any more than I can understand what the men are saying to Cyril in the dark yonder, although I can catch a clear question or reply of his occasionally. The village Sesuto on such nights is abbreviated, colloquial, friendly. It is the chaffing talk of an inn-parlour at home, the mysterious jovial slang of a cheerful club. I can get along on the lines of the grammar or prayer book, but neither (the sorrow of it !) are really human lines.

I have told you of times and villages in which I have sat friendly by a fire or talked with children, but I realise to-night how rare they are. True, the children playing in the moonlight are not afraid of me, and they will smile if I go near,

but I am the mysterious white stranger, and the play will drift off if I move. Heathen men round the fire will lapse into silence if I come up, or, more educated, ask me questions that often veil a half-felt racial hostility ; Christians will speak cautiously, fearful lest they give their own folk away, never forgetful that I am white and a priest. Nine nights out of ten, in most villages anyway, I have no *friend*.

Two things fight against me : my colour and my office. Mr. Cripps has a yarn of a white man who had to take to Mashona dress and customs to avoid the law, and I often wish I could do something like that. I would so like to get inside my people. Possibly I never should ; possibly, if I did, I should wish I had not. Possibly I might even come to envy Mr. Cripps' hero's fate of the mistaken grains of white powder and the lonely little krantz. But I wish I could try.

The priest, too—I wonder if you realise how often he is terribly alone. I do not know which is the worse, to be treated by others as if one were one among them, or to be treated as something plainly different. If the first, one is continually being stabbed by the different outlooks and values of men in the world, and one is always half longing, half dreading, to let oneself go ; if the second, oh, my dear, but that burden is so

hard to bear! Speaking quite truly and reverently, Jesus must have felt it so. Never was there lonely man as He. God-Man, on earth—what isolation! We priests are the only ones who can know.

But even this is not all in my case. To-night I climbed up above the village and perched myself on a big stone to see it all. And I saw so much more than the village. Here am I, neither a good Anglican nor a recognised Catholic, the suspect of my own communion and the outcast of the other. It does so hurt to feel that there is no place in what ought to be home for me. I know I seem to many of my brethren and superiors a disloyal, wilful, disobedient son, so I do not blame them; besides, if the truth must out, they seem to me singularly fussy, cobwebby, blind, and, to be quite honest, dull, and, indeed, they would be incredibly foolish if they were not glad that I am on the Berg, more or less out of harm's way, and certainly buried. But, despite all mutual understanding, the fact remains. It is terribly lonely, dear, to know oneself in a communion but not of it, and to feel that work done is work that the leaders will prefer not to own. This is not a grumble, mark you. I do not honestly think that it has made any difference. But there it is, and very lonely on the Berg.

It is in the evenings such as this that I feel it most. By day, riding along, I hardly even mind not having a friend to talk to, there is so much to see and think about. Besides, I think I am growing accustomed to not having friends. "There is no friend for the stranger save the stranger"—that is a Russian saying of great beauty. Still I have a great number of friendly acquaintances, more than most people, perhaps, for I always seem to make such easily, and always did. But friends are different, and they grow fewer. I remember a priest in Africa, a tall, spare, kindly man who was looking in the face a slow death from disease, talking once to me and saying that he found, as one grew older, that one came to rely less and less on friends. A man made friends, and thought he had made them for his life; and then one married, and another got into some other environment, and slowly, imperceptibly, without either wishing it, friendship faded away. (I shall never forget that he said it quite bravely, with a smile.) Is that not extraordinarily true? Of course there are people whom one likes immensely and with whom it is possible really to renew a friendship from time to time, but the long and the short of it is that it seems to me one grows to realise the inevitableness of being alone. We began alone, and we

certainly end alone, but I think one comes to feel more and more how true it is that nobody really understands, nobody really sympathises, and that nobody can.

The moulding years ought to make one more indifferent to this, I think, because they ought to make one stronger, and fashion one's mind to resolute thinking, and to decisions which one feels are right for oneself at all events. At school and college, and for some years after, one wonders continually how others will criticise, and one strives to gain a place to justify oneself. A man, at any rate, meeting the conflict of ideas in religion and social life, is anxious about them, and wants continually to know what other people think. He wants, too, to share his conclusions, to strengthen himself by making friends with whom he can breast the current of life. But as the years go by he gets not so much disappointed as less interested. He begins to feel that others cannot help overmuch, and that it does not much matter if they do not. He himself for himself must look up into the eyes of God, and it is no use, then, looking deprecatingly round to see what one's friends are doing.

Even love looks to me (at least to-night) the last and most desperate attempt to escape our inevitable loneliness. The man and the woman

look into each other's eyes, and they think they see understanding and union for all time. They always say how they would like to get right away by themselves and just live for each other all the time. Surely every one in love has felt that. In heroic novels the man wants his girl to help him to do heroic deeds, and so on, but only in novels, I think. He never really wants that, for when he is in love he does not care two straws about heroic deeds. Nature is not thinking of heroic deeds, and she is too strong for both of them. They may come back, as it were, and possibly hand to hand, to the conquest of life, but at the moment all they want is to forget the world in each other.

Of course I may be wrong, but I think the sense of alliance is chiefly an illusion. It is not merely that the current of life tends to bring different duties and influences in their way, but deep down, when Nature is tired of them, having fulfilled her purpose, they rub their eyes and wake up as from a dream to find that each has a separate soul and a lonely one. Possibly those people who seem to be able to forget that they have a soul at all never feel this, but I do not think there are many such.

If this be so, what do you suppose one ought to do? The Berg teaches, I think, especially in a

native village by night. The great, lonely hills, the silent, lonely stars, the dumb, uncomplaining earth, all speak. They tell you just to face the facts, and not complain. They tell you not to hedge and fight against the truth, but to go out and on and to take what comes of friendship and of love gladly, but undeceived. There is no final shelter for one's naked soul. Our mother's skirts sheltered us when we were kiddies, but only for a while. So it is with everything and every one, until one comes at last to see that one may hide in God, but never from Him.

XII

OF THE LOVE OF GOD

MY dear, a very curious and tender little affair occurred this morning, on which I have been meditating all day. There is nothing in it, really, or I suppose not, and yet a mystic would certainly feel otherwise. How I wish one knew if Almighty God really plots these things! The Gospel is not a sure guide, for if we are told that not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, the inference certainly is that the fall of the Tower of Siloam was not designed. Yet nothing can occur outside His Will, and I suppose all things are but shadows of reality. So it may be that I saw what I was meant to see, and that I understand what I was meant to understand. At any rate, this was the way of it.

We had been riding, Cyril and I, for the whole morning along the high path that leads to the north. It is a hot, stony, trying road, at a level of some nine thousand feet, and the ground is barer there than any for miles around. There is a view, it is true, a view to the right of the border peaks, across a wide, hard valley, and to the left a

tumbled mass of mountains that melt into the horizon. The sky is truly a huge inverted bowl over all. Not a cloud flecked it to-day, and I, with a slight touch of fever, felt it to be brooding and terrible. I have ridden this path and sung along it as I went, deeming the heavens a perfect parable of the Love of God, so immense, eternal, and all covering. I have felt how one cannot escape from the Love of God, or change it, and how, no matter what one does beneath, still beyond the imagination, north, south, east, and west, God is Love. The very clouds, earth-born things, are no part of that infinite blue space where the light of countless suns passes eternally on swift errands of life.

But it was all otherwise to-day. I was very tired and very hot, and my head ached. The ponies seemed to travel so slowly, and yet it was impossible to speed them up. I made restless, irritated efforts, and then the great scorching vault overwhelmed me, and I held the reins in loose fingers and rode in growing pain. I thought the sky was still like God, but to-day He was inexorable and pitiless, as He so often seems. But is He ever?

At any rate, towards midday we reached a place where the road curved to the right to avoid a sharp face of rock. It seemed to me that to

off-saddle there might offer a chance of shade in some crevice of that cliff, and so I called to Cyril, and dismounted. I staggered along to the left over broken and falling ground, and found what I wanted, a small cave that offered a refuge from the sun. In my flask was a little lukewarm tea, so I had a drink and lay down to sleep for half an hour if I could. But I could not sleep for a long time. I lay with closed eyes and aching head, and I dare not tell you all I thought. Men are creatures of mood universally, I suppose, but some of us are worse than others. There are times when I cannot see what end is served by my existence, and when I am all one great revolt. Yet how one dreads to die! It is curious. One may not fear the beyond; one may not shrink, I think, from the passing; but one dreads to leave this grim school with all the problems unsolved, and the discipline not learned. It could only mean worse on the other side, and maybe the eternal loss of all our dreams.

Well, then, I suppose I dozed off. At any rate, I woke up later feeling better, but thirsty; and sitting up to see if I could find a spring somewhere, I saw what I had not somehow noticed before. A few hundred yards away was a break in the face of the cliff, and growing up out of it, as often happens in the Berg, were some wild

poplars, whose shimmering leaves just appeared above the rocks. I thought that a spring might well be there, and I made for the place, walking slowly in the heat. Skirting some huge boulders, I could see at last up the crevasse, and noticed at once that the place had been converted into a cattle kraal. The face of the hill sloped over except where the split occurred, and a low wall of stone had been built out round it to enclose a sheltered spot. At one corner the wall reached the cliff; at the other it stopped at the thick press of young poplars. And there was a break in the middle of it for the beasts to enter.

I moved forward to that break idly, for no water could be immediately there, and there, in the very door, stood stock-still with surprise. Where the poplars grew right at the cliff's foot sat a young native woman, and she had a baby at her breast. Behind her, staring down at her, was a native in a blanket, leaning on a stick, and I could not see his face in the shadow; while in front, with some half-dozen sheep of the kraal, was a herd-boy, a wisp of rag about his middle, squatting there on his hams, his back to me, and a gourd of water in his hands. It was as if he offered a gift.

None of us moved at all while the seconds slipped by. I stood there in the sun, and

emotion flooded through me. Oh, I daresay it was stupid beyond words, but it was so absolutely a nativity. There was nothing missing, nothing wrong, not even my hard, stubborn heart and my bitter thoughts. In the moment of my thought of God's aloofness, there had been given me a vision of His humanity.

We hear so much in these days of the fashioning of God to human imagination. Our thinkers are always pushing Him farther and farther away, till we are told that just as it was the half-savage thought of Moses that conceived he had seen God's "back parts," so it is our still anthropomorphic conceptions that allow us to believe in the Incarnation and to speak of His Face and Heart. You remember that Mr. Wells offers us only a dim Veiled Being, or, on the other hand, a God that is but half a God, since He is no more powerful, no more sure of attainment, than we ourselves. Mr. Wells says he does not name two Gods, but one; only that Veiled Being, too veiled for us to glimpse even in the moments of our strongest vision, Whom somehow our thought must create to fill a gap, broods, despite our banishment of Him, like a nightmare over all. It seems impossible that He shall have nothing to say. But even if He be Love, what sort of love will His be? Not a human love, at any rate.

His thought must be in another category to ours, and His love as well, if He could remain veiled and watch the passion of the centuries.

It is this human love in God for which we crave. You know what I mean? A dog may love you, and you may love a dog, but what a poor business it is! It is not merely that he is made differently from us, and cannot share our joys and sorrows with real understanding. There is something much deeper that is missing: the call of human heart to heart, the yearning for rest the one in the other, that terrible longing for a refuge and completion in the other's love that belongs, so far as we know, only to human hearts.

Suppose God has that! Suppose He really understands just what we feel, not understanding as you might conceive Allah to understand, by an effort of His omniscience, but understanding because His Heart throbs as ours throb! How wonderful it would be. He would know how terrible life is if such love be thwarted, how resistless such love is in its demands. He would surely only stretch His hands out in fatherly tenderness when we fled together for refuge to Him.

I wonder what He wants. I wonder if He wants us to love Him as we love one another.

Do you know, I think not quite that, but I think that what He wants is just exactly what I have said, that we should love and yet have room for Him, and together take our love to Him, as our best treasure, that He may joy in it. I think He will be glad one day if we come saying: "Oh, Father, even our brethren forgot what we felt, but we know that You remember. Neither heaven nor hell will shelter us, and so we come to You . . ."

That might be the meaning of Bethlehem, and of the rest of that wonderful life, not merely the working out of a purpose of salvation, but an exhibition of His secret mind. It is as if He had smiled and said: "They will never guess what I am unless I show them. Let Me cradle at a mother's breast, let Me go up to a marriage feast, let Me weep at the tomb of a brother, let Me be kissed by lips of sin, let My Name among archangels and men be a simple baby name, and they will know by that that My eyes are tender when two lovers kiss . . ."

The old man stirred in the shadows, and the herd-boy moved easily to his feet. The girl looked up, and I caught her eyes. God and I were glad.

XIII

OF THE TOUCHING OF THE WORLD INTANGIBLE

YOU have been calling to me all day, calling as really, it has seemed to me, as if it were your voice, and not that of the herd-boys that echoed from time to time in the valley through which we rode. I have heard you persistently above the song of the stream, above the colours of the flowers, even above the depth of the blue sky and the shining of the sun. More than that, I think you have been calling in and through them, though of that I am not certain. If they are what I suspect, I should be sure, but since I cannot tell what they are, I am only certain of your voice.

I wonder very much if you know that you have been calling and that I have been hearing, but though I wonder, I have not the least desire to prove it in the way that some seem to wish. That seems to me an idle thing. It would, indeed, be to me almost sacrilegious if I were to try to find out how far you knew what you were about, how far purposeful; it is enough that your soul has been wistful for me to-day,

and I know it. Why, like Thomas, should I want to thrust my hands into the print of the nails? That there have been wounds, and that the wounds endure, is far more real to me than any print of them.

They say that the world is crazy after Spiritualism in these days, and even up here on the Berg echoes of this newest unrest reach us. The subject is, of course, intensely interesting in its own way, but I want to write it down for you that I have to make a big effort to get the modern Spiritualists' point of view, though I could easily have been a necromancer in the days of the Old Testament! I suppose the great explanation is that vast numbers of modern Europeans grow up without a religion, or with the merest shreds of a religion, and these shreds based on no sure foundation at all. Then comes a shock, like the losses of relations and friends in the War, and people find they have nothing on which to rest. But those of us who have a religion like the Catholic Faith simply do not want Spiritualism. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle accuses the "clergy of the Churches," I see, of belittling or neglecting his great discoveries, but the clergy of the Catholic Faith have been teaching the principal tenets of Spiritualism all the centuries of the Christian Era. Sir

Arthur Conan Doyle must, I suppose, being an educated man, have made some inquiries concerning the Catholic Religion, but he cannot know the Catholic Faith. If, as a medical man, he had gone to Lourdes instead of to clairvoyants, he would have found stories the equal of any of his as evidence of survival and of the after-life. The records of the Saints, down to those of this century, offer evidence as well authenticated as and far more reasonable than the records of Spiritualism. And then there is Our Lord, Whom we know to be living.

One wonders what will happen in this strangely mixed age. Possibly, one of these days, the popular monthlies and a man or two who can win the attention of their editors and their readers will discover the Catholic Religion. Meantime the world, having laughed to scorn fifty years ago the "materialism" of St. John and the New Testament generally, is eagerly inquiring of what material the spirits build their houses in "Summerland," and rejoicing in the fact that one may obtain there even whisky and cigars.

It seems to me, then, that a Catholic may take an extreme interest in psychology, and study it; may investigate eagerly supernatural occurrences and seek to co-ordinate the laws that

govern them; and may well walk through this world with his spiritual eyes and ears open. Indeed, I marvel that he can do otherwise. Since we know well enough that man "survives"; that he passes into fuller life in the great enveloping spiritual world; that that world has frequent communication with this; that there are established avenues by which one may come to the threshold and pass over; and that we have to hand a great Divine machinery for the exchange of influence between that world and this, this world and that—since we know all these things, how can we fail to make use of them? But of what use to us are these ancient methods that the Spiritualists are dragging once more into the light of day and advertising as if they were new things? It is not necessary that a table should rap in order that I may learn that Sister Teresa, the Little Flower, who died the other day, is actively engaged from that other sphere in assisting us, and I do not need automatic writing to assure me that my friends are in a spiritual sphere of progression and purgation and would be helped by my prayers. There is more evidence of that to be found in the stories of the Saints and of the Church than there is for the battle of Waterloo.

This modern Spiritism, then, leaves me

curiously cold for all that I am intensely interested in the subject with which it deals. To me, you see, it goes to work so strangely, and it almost makes one smile to be greeted by inch-high headlines in the Press which read very much as if they were such statements as these :

Great Pronouncement by Famous Scientist :

There is a SUN in the SKY !

Do not fail to see the sensational article in this number :

How I Discovered that DAY follows NIGHT !!

Revolutionary Experiments by great Naturalist :

Caterpillars Develop into BUTTERFLIES !!!

One smiles, I say. I suppose one would smile anywhere, but especially on the Berg.

It is the grandeur, maybe, and the solitude ; or it may be the nearness of the sky ; or it may be that one is thrust out here, as it were, to catch the whispers of that world about us ; or it may be that mountain tops are, after all, the scenes of angel visits and of the manifestations of God. Anyhow the half of the world that is crazy on Spiritism cannot altogether laugh at Horeb and Sinai and Olivet any longer. At any rate, I have found the veil more thin than ever on the face of the Berg.

I could write you stories if I liked, but I do not propose at length to do so. There is just

one, however, that is in my mind (because I passed the place again to-day) which I would like to mention for a certain reason. It might easily be worked up into a tale for a magazine, but I shrink from that because somehow (forgive me if this is very silly) it would seem to me to trade on the poor souls whose secret has been for a moment or two shown to me. The tale-telling would be like the exhibition of a cripple or, still more, as if one were to earn a guinea or two by working up the story of some simple tragic love that had been confided to one.

But there is a place here, on the Berg, very lonely and remote, to which my boy and I came one dying evening in late autumn, having travelled far, and made a hasty camp. We had pushed on to cover the ground on the homeward trail, and there was hardly light to do more than espy a fountain and gather some bushes and roots for fuel ere the dark fell. The kettle boiled, and, our food eaten, we rolled in blankets and tried to sleep. The boy went off easily, but I could not. I lay first on one side and then on the other; I stared at the stars; I resolutely turned my face to the opposite hillside—each in turn, but all no good. There was a faint moon and no wind. The night was very still.

The first indication of anything unusual that I saw was a shadow between myself and the hillside. I regarded it intently, and saw that it was a man. He passed along in the faint moonlight and entered what I saw in the moment of his entering to be a hut. You might suppose that I should have been curious or frightened ; but I was neither, only interested. And I grew more interested when I saw more huts, more figures, and even—I am not romancing to you, dear, and I certainly was not dreaming—dogs. I think it was at that that I began to puzzle if we had not, perchance, missed seeing the village when we encamped in the late evening, and I rolled over and sat up in the blankets to ask my boy. He was apparently asleep still, for he was not moving, but covered up entirely, as a native sleeps, and I leaned over to waken him. But just then I was arrested by a figure coming towards me from the opposite slope of the valley. It was that of a man, quite distinct to see, naked except for a loin-cloth, and carrying spears. He was staring straight in front of him and running hard. I knew that he was shouting as well, though I cannot tell you how I knew, for I am not sure that I heard with my ears. The sight of him held me. It was all over in a few seconds after that, for he was

coming swiftly nearer, and I was right in his path, and a terror began to fall on me as I realised it. Then, when he was only a few yards away, the moon shone for a moment more clearly ; I saw what I took to be a great gash in his shoulder and breast ; I cried out something and gripped my boy. And as I did so there was nothing, and when I turned and looked towards the village, there was nothing there, either.

My boy awoke slowly, slowly enough to enable me to get over any fear I had and to put him off with a question or two on other subjects. After a while, too, I slept, and did not wake till dawn, nor did I dream. But in the morning light I walked to that hillside and poked around, and then called the boy. " Yes, Father," he said after examination, " there have been huts here, I should say, and they have been burned down—see this stone, and that—but a long time ago . . ."

When I read what Rupert Brooke says of the empty, spiritless Rockies, I thought of that night, and I have thought of it again and again since. There have been other things, too, up here, but my point is that, whenever I think of such happenings, they seem to me to be of less significance than the consciousness of you that I had to-day. It is a small matter that we sometimes, some of us, see the shadows of what

has been, either the shadows cast by the mind of our sub-conscious self or the objective shadows of that real spiritual world thrown, for some reason and for some moments, on the screen of this but half-real, temporal world. Doubtless, if we did not blind ourselves, we should see much more. But the matter that seems to me great is that one can be conscious of listening just the other side of a curtain all but all the time ; that one can ride for a day and feel that at any moment the visible might dissolve like those old magic lantern exhibitions of our childhood and show another picture ; and that spirit can cry out to spirit so certainly across what may seem gulfs to us now, but which shall surely prove to be no more than a little space across which two may lean and kiss.

So, my dear, have I heard you persistently all day, above the song of the stream, above the colours of the flowers, even above the depth of the sky and the shining of the sun. Your calling made me restless at first, for I wanted more of you than that, far more than I can say. And I told you so, and lifted my face to you, and sent my message out ; and I have peace to-night. Perhaps you were asking definitely just for that, and perhaps now you too are more content to wait.

XIV

OF THE TRUE RICHES

THERE are certain verses in the Bible which contain only half-truths, if, indeed, they are truths at all, shocking as I suppose it is to say so. Of all such verses that I dislike one of the worst is, I think, a text which finds a prominent place in what remains of the religion of Englishmen, for most English people are still at least buried by the Church. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out"—there you have it. It is just not true. For myself, I hate the saying.

You wonder why, perhaps, I should think of writing to you while up here on such a gloomy subject, but, as in the case of so many other things, this wonderful old Berg has so much to say about it. The Berg has been preaching to me all day long on the foolishness of the text, and I rather like the sermon. So I want to pass it on to you.

The Berg said, first of all, that of course there was an elementary and superficial truth about the words, and that no teacher could show

me that better than itself. We were passing some tumbled piles of stone at the time, and they were immediately offered me as a proof. For several generations men and women had lived there, lived busy, crowded lives in their own way of love and hate and passion; had built their houses of the grass and stone around; had ploughed up their lands; had wrestled with Nature and fought through snows and drought; and then had passed as mysteriously as they had come. Disease or War swept them off, or maybe they only trekked away—no one now can say. A few years, and you had to look closely to know that they had been there. The face of the Berg was again as it had been. They had brought nothing into this world, and they took nothing out.

So I reasoned, like a silly fool, for it was not true even of them. Those little babies of a vanished past had brought with them the heritage of a racial curse older than history, each one bringing his share. Each had come heavily handicapped to the race, so that they had made no progress where others run fast and far. No good angel, moulding their souls from the treasures of God, had borne them into this world, but into each embryo being had been packed that which would inevitably dwarf their

intelligences, sell them to passion, and brand them among men. Of Ham I know nothing, and care less ; I doubt he ever lived ; but it might well have been a sensualist such as he who sent these so far from empty-handed to live their day on the face of the Berg.

Then do you suppose that even they went empty-handed out ? I cannot. Their fifty years would have been enough to burden them still more with selfishness, ignorance, and the craving for animal passions. And none of that cargo was jettisoned when, ship by ship, they sailed out from their brief anchorage into the unknown. What the Owner made of it all when their bills of lading were given in, I cannot even guess, but at least He could not have expected much else. I know enough of primitive man to know that.

On the other hand, there are such as Viola. You remember what went to the making of Viola :—

“ Spin, Queen Mary, a
Brown tress for Viola !

“ Scoop, young Jesus, for her eyes,
Wood-browned pools of Paradise.

“ Lave, Prince Jesus, a
Star in eyes of Viola !

“ Breathe, Regal Spirit, a
Flashing soul for Viola !

“Child-angels, from your wings
Fall the roseal hoverings

· · · · ·
On the cheeks of Viola.”

There was a rich loading for you! Just so the greater part of our treasures of art, music, literature, and beauty was brought to us. But who loads this ship thus and that ship as those others, who can say? Or why? And the pathos of the contrast between Viola and any one of those vanished dusky babies!

But speculation of that sort is rather useless, and, after all, it need worry us very little. I have met men who seemed to find it an intolerable thing that any man should come into this world rich with treasure, or cursed, but I fail to see myself why they should feel so. God is great and just. If He is also inscrutable, what are we to complain? And maybe it is better to enter burdened hopelessly and succumb in the end, after a well-fought fight, than to enter rich and squander the treasure. “How hardly shall they that have riches enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” Never, at any rate, was truer text than that, and you will remember that the servants were sent out into the highways and hedges to bring in, not the rich, but the blind and halt and maimed. And the Lord of the

feast doubtless sees to it that they have healing salve for their wounds, and water in which to wash the stains of travel, and newer, cleaner, brighter robes than ever they wore here. I have found it in my heart to envy them.

The other half of the question is enormously more interesting—the question of the treasures we can gather on our journey and bear away with us. The old Berg, needless to say, has no hesitation as to their nature, and it seems so obvious here that one hardly likes to write it. For instance, last night I stood and watched the sun set over the great rift in the Berg that makes the valley of the Orange river, and—why I hardly know—the beauty and peace of the world made the tears come to my eyes and the breath catch in my throat. It was so utterly lovely and still—oh, my dear, if only I could tell you! And then I thought to myself: “Suppose, now, you were standing on a gold mine—you might be—would the gain of the gold mine be worth the treasure of that sunset?” And the old Berg silently answered me, not without the rather sarcastic smile of old age, and I knew, indeed, it would not. For the gold would never be mine, no, not though I found, mined, exploited, revelled in it; I should needs

leave it all behind ; but as for the gold of the sunset, it is mine for ever.

They are fools who slave all their years for an existence ; utter fools who live among bricks and mortar all their days ; fools, that is, unless they have learned the secret of this new Philosopher's Stone whereby even the dirt and dinginess of a city suburb can be minted into the eternal gold. For let us set it down, my dear : it is possible to grow very wealthy even in a slum, like some of the folk " Down our Street." It is possible, but it is very hard, and I refuse to believe we humans were ever meant to have to labour so for our gold. Why, here I pick it up in handfuls every day ; I even, God forgive me, grow tired of picking it up ; and sometimes, if I dare write it, I know I even seek to waste what I have acquired. And this eternal treasure, that we can carry away with us, is not easily lost. Easily won it is, but hardly lost. Oh, the good God !

Yes, I do not doubt that Diogenes in his tub, Simon Stylites on his pillar, the filthy old anchorite who talked to Richard Raynal, and many more like them, can go rich away when their hour comes, and certainly many of them have. But it is a vocation. One must be called to it. The pity is that nine-tenths of the modern

folk, who have to live their lives out all but as much tied down, in fact, as any of these, have not been called to it. They have been pushed into it; that is all. They cannot get out, perhaps, but for the most part they do not wish to do so. And then they bring children into the world, not happily naked, but all wrapped up in their own old grave-clothes of mind, and their children bring children, and God help us all. Why should you and I have been delivered from all that, I wonder? The insoluble question again—let us leave it.

The fact is that you and I are among the millionaires. A man is not held to be conceited if he proclaims that he can sign a cheque for a million dollars, so why should it be conceit for you and me to say so of ourselves? I am, then, becoming a millionaire. I have learnt to laugh with joy at the antics of the world in a dozen blades of grass. I have seen suns die and flame again so often that honestly their glory is rarely long out of my eyes, and I know, at least, that it never will go for ever. I have heard the morning stars sing for joy and the whole wide earth take up the chorus so often that the refrain is ever in my ears. I have felt the tingle of the cold, and the blaze of the sun, and the blows of the wind, and the sting of the rain so often that

I know now they are brethren and Death their dear sister. And I have seen God walk so often among the trees in the cool of the day, and have met His angels so often on their errands, that I know, wonderful though it is, that He is Friend, and that whichever of the angels He sends to me will be sent friendly-wise. Oh, I am rich, I am very rich, my dear. It is all quite true: there are fabulous riches on the Face of the Berg.

And you—you are growing rich, are you not? You must be, for you have given so much away. Rich as I am, I all but envy you your riches. You will pass over with wealth so untold that surely the trumpets on the other side will blow as for the coming of a queen. I have watched you grow rich, and I have marvelled at your treasure. The sharpest thorns in all the Crown were offered you, and you took them with a smile, and pressed them down so simply, but so truly, that the very Offerer must have wondered to see you, and from each thorn has sprung an eternal rose of such beauty that no gold of earth can value them. The bitterest drink filled the chalice offered you, and you drank each drop so bravely that now no treasure of rubies can exceed yours. Pearls? You have wept them one by one into that safe hiding-place where no thieves

break through nor steal, whither you shall go one day and find them.

Poor old Job ! I hope he was only a mystery play after all. He said some wonderful things, and not for the world would I have missed them, but, my faith, he was a poor old man ! Even at the end he counted his wealth in sheep, and oxen, and asses, and wives, and children, and houses, of which, indeed, he wrote truly enough when he said he could not take them away. Possibly he discovered, after all, that he was richer on the other side than he thought ; he ought to have been, considering the music God sang in his ears. But if he was not only a mystery play, and if he is really poor over there, why, then, when we come together with the infinite riches we have gathered on earth and carried over with us, we will seek him out, and bid him share.

XV

OF THE SHOUTING OF THE SONS OF GOD

EVERY one writes of the sunsets, very few of the dawns, I suppose because even poets are not often up early enough to see them. Occasionally sleeping on deck in the Tropics, or rather trying to sleep, an early morning whiff of air wakes a tourist, and he sees ; and still more rarely brave spirits climb Alps before the light, and write home about it. But we moderns see mostly the flaming sunsets, even in smoky cities, for the sun in his dying even glories in the smoke, and our tragedy empurples half the sky.

But on the Berg one may see the dawn very often, for one goes early to bed on trek for lack of anything better to do when the dark falls and supper is over, and one rises early to travel as far as possible before the heat. I wake nearly always in that mystical half-hour when it is still dark and yet one knows that the hours of dark are numbered, and I lie in my blankets and watch the sun rising more mornings than not. May I write of it, then, and the more so because commonly it is not in the least what one would

expect or the sort of spectacle that is written about?

In the first place, you do not often see glories of crimson and gold, or even of silver and blue. The sun does not peep over the tops of the mountains, or rise suddenly from the edge of the dark world like a disc of fire. You cannot watch dark change to light in ten minutes, or the colours flame up, as at sunset they flame out even in England, while you wait. True, in a sense, all the colours are there, and there is a gilding of mountain-tops, but it is not spectacular as we have learnt to reckon spectacles, or not often, at any rate.

No, it is infinitely more mysterious, more symbolical, more mystical. There is next to nothing to describe, and yet there is so much to think about. And there is time to think, for the dawn takes a long time.

Yes, that is the first wonderful thing about it: it takes a very long time. At evening you can say: "Oh, the sun is setting; come and see," and you can stand and see and go away all in a little while. But on the Berg, at any rate, it is rare that it would be possible to call a person to see the dawn, and possibly it would be rare to find a person with sufficient patience to wait for it. For the sunrise is

majestic in its unperturbed leisure, in its slow solemnity.

You wake, and you know that the world is all aquiver for a new birth. It is incredible, that sense that every animate and inanimate thing is coming slowly to an ecstasy which, you feel, is only half understood. The world is poised on tiptoe to welcome a Divine, incomprehensible mystery. It feels that it is about to bathe in the eternal fire of immortality, but it does not know—it never knows, and never will know—just what that means. So there is an awed hush, and, like Elijah in the mouth of the cave, you catch the murmur of a still small voice that is no more than the breath of silence. I cannot really write to you of it. Again and again, at some midday, I have smiled to myself at the remembrance and known that it could not have been, but again and again, before the dawn, I have wrapped my face in my blanket to wait while God went by.

It is the birds who are brave enough to break that silence. We have no great songsters on the Berg—indeed, by day you would say that we had none, for there is hardly a bird-voice except that of the big crows that adjure the disturbers of their solitude from some rock by the way, or the doves in the river willows. But in the dawning you hear them. The little birds that run among

the stones rather than fly, and the smaller birds still that sweep in clouds over the lands, all begin to twitter expectantly. And there are a thousand other sounds, I know not of what. The air is atremble with sound. You turn the ear to catch it, and cannot tell if you heard it or if you did not. It is as if solemn personages cried to each other across vast spaces in voices too great for us to hear, just as the tiny insects beneath our feet seem not to hear us. And the wind rises, too, and bears on its breast the murmur of water from a hundred tiny streams, while the whisper of its message stirs the very soul of the world and moves it to a prayer.

Then the light begins. You do not know that it has begun until you perceive suddenly that the night is no longer night. It is utterly imperceptible, that gradual lightening. At first it is the darkness that grows less heavy while not ceasing to be dark, and then it is the world all about that takes shape rather than the dark that goes. Far more slowly than the turn of the tide the day rolls in, but, as the tide, it laps the crags and kopjes and widens slowly, slowly, from a wash of something that is only just not light into light itself. More than an hour will go by up there in some fold of the Berg, and still you will not see the sun. You rise finally to look for him, im-

patient and eager for the warmth of his kiss, and at long last, why, there is the golden radiance crowning the mountain-top, and there is the wide shaft of fire stabbing the valley !

The very slowness of it all gives one the impression of irresistible power, and it is that sense that keeps me wrapped closely in my blankets many and many a time when I ought to be up. The dawn is alive ; it is, as it were, the aura of a living person, the immanation of Power. The night does battle with it ; the very Berg towers up to resist it ; the great valleys clutch themselves and their treasure of darkness ; but all in vain. The dawn suffers innumerable checks of rock and spur that stay its coming. It moves so slowly that the hearts of the watchers tremble lest it should not come, but it moves so surely that one knows there is nought to do but to abide its coming. If a man is in tune for it, that slow coming breathes a wonderful and tender confidence and peace, but if he is not, it can make him fear.

I wonder often if the Lord Christ will come again like that. I do not see why He should not. His first coming was so entirely unexpected, and even although it seems now to us to have been very plainly written of and clear, still no one expected the Mother and the Babe at the

Manger. So then of His second coming we may not understand the texts. Maybe His radiance is already painted on the clouds on which He sits, and that is why men do to-day as a whole place Honour and Liberty and Justice higher than before. I wish I could see Truth set high, however, for it seems to me that that is a star of the morning for which we care less and less, in whose very existence we hardly believe. But I do not know; at any rate, He may come so. The trembling hearts may yet find that He has been coming all the time and is here; they may find that it is not so much that He has come as that the night has gone. And in the moment of discovery, as they rise and say: "Why, it is day," the sun himself will appear above the far horizon, and we shall see the King in His Beauty.

And perhaps Christ comes to individual souls rather like this. Men are not often convinced by an argument, by a book, by a preacher, by any one thing. Often, during the process of conviction, a man is not conscious that he is being convinced at all, and especially is this so with religious truth, the process of which is above us, beyond us, outside us, like a dawn. The change steals silently and imperceptibly over the wide horizons as well as over the valley at

our feet. Suddenly we see this or that more clearly, why we scarcely can say ; and as likely as not the thing seen to be clearer seems to have no connection with the sunrise of the main truth at all. And then in a moment we perceive that the night has gone ; we see that the sun illumines every tree and rock and valley ; we know that nothing is without a purpose and a meaning, that all things are part of a great whole, and that the sun of truth has risen upon us. Nor can we give much of an explanation. We really scarcely know ourselves how it came to pass, only that once we were blind and now we see.

But, for all this, the dawn is very cruel. It is inexorable fate. It comes, it floods the world with hope, it rouses us eager and expectant, and in a little the intolerable heat overlaps the world ; we trek on hot and parched, we fail to attain, and we cast ourselves gladly down as the spent day dies. The kindly night deepens and veils and smothers, but far too soon the world trembles once more at the approach of its tyrant and lord. He has been but playing with us. He will call us up and thrust us out again with a smile, but it is a cruel smile. He knows well enough that we cannot do all we would, that we shall not attain what we wish,

that our strength will fail, and that he is too great for us.

And that is so like life. At twenty one is so sure that it is good, and one glories in one's strength ; at thirty one is walking in a pitiless, hard light ; at forty one sees that the day is already on the wane ; at fifty one wonders if there will be rest and plenty in the evening ; and at sixty —— ? Ah, I do not know. Maybe there are brave hearts who think confidently of another dawn as they know their day is done, but there are more to whom the falling veil of darkness seems alone to bring them peace.

But I will tell you of my hope. The dawn does not fulfil the promise of the stars ; it conceals them. The glare of the risen sun of our poor planet floods us in a garish light, and wearies with its heat, but the soft-lit stars are still there if hidden, remote, undying, very patient. Waking in the dawn, one sees them, and if they are lost in the day, they shine again more brightly with the night. So maybe the stars of our ideals still glitter about the throne of God and in the halo of His Mother. Maybe our last night will pass with the dawning of those other suns. Maybe the whole wide world expects that day, is groaning and travailing for it, and hopes anew that it has come at last with

every dawn. Maybe in the dawning it is but the expectancy of a song that has not yet been sung that one catches, and from the longing of their ardent hearts may learn what it will be when the Sons of God shout for joy.

XVI

OF THE BITTER CROSS

THIS began by being an altogether delightful day. Arriving fairly late last night at an out-of-the-way village right up one of those swift little streams that flow inland from the Berg to join up eventually with the Orange river, we found a white man and a missionary already there. This is rare enough, as you can imagine, and a very pleasant surprise, but it was still more pleasant when the missionary turned out to be my friend Fr. Lemans. I found him sitting on the floor of a hut, his back against the wall, eating with a native spoon from a basin of *mafi* (or thick milk) with mealie bread crumbled upon it. He was as surprised to see me as I was to see him, for it is rare that we actually hit on each other in our zigzag trekking, though we frequently cross each other's trails. He got up, a shortish, stoutish man, his face all smiles, and then we sat down together, and I helped him with his *mafi*. Cyril brought my packs into the same hut, and later on you might have seen us, each stretched out on his blankets, on either side of a candle stuck in an old tin, and each smoking many pipes of peace.

He had been long on trek, and he has been far longer in such work than I. Indeed, I was a boy at school when he first came out to the Berg, and he has been steadily roaming up and down these mountains with one object while I have been painfully sorting out my ideas in half a dozen countries. Never did Frenchman love home and kindred more than he, and if you will listen, he will ramble on for hours about the diocese in which he was born, its lovely churches, its kindly bishop, and its devoted faithful. Yet he has turned his back on all that for ever. For Christ's sake and the Gospel's he has neither wife, children, lands, nor home ; and if there be a wistful longing sometimes, just tinging a phrase or underlying a sentence, still, for all that, Fr. Lemans is very content, I think. He and his are a strange commentary on life, my dear. You and I want so much, do we not ? and we are so torn by this and that, by love and passion, by hopes and fears ; but he seems to me to have almost no hopes and no fears ; if love, certainly no passion ; if inevitable worries, certainly no distress. He has his work, and he does it ; he does not argue about his Faith or doubt it ; as to the future, well, another will carry on when he lays down his tools ; the Church changes not, and the future is with God.

So he travels all but unceasingly from tiny hamlet to tiny hamlet, living among the natives, not seeing a white man for weeks, and rich enough on twenty pounds a year and the grant of a new suit when his old one is in rags. When he came his Catholics were less than a couple of score in all these mountains; now he has about six hundred communicants, a regular route, a line of small churches, and a steadily growing army of hearers and catechumens. His discipline, length of instruction, and standard of knowledge for baptism are surprising, and I like it especially that he has three days' spiritual retreat for natives before he baptises them. I wish we could do something like that, but, sticking as we do to the traditional times of Baptism at Easter and Christmas, this is more than our one-man parishes can manage at such busy times. Fr. Lemans never seems cast down, and never, on the other hand, particularly joyful. Doubtless he has his moments, but on the whole this is typical of his life, one-centred, devoted, but in a sense indifferent. He appears to me to keep his eyes on God and to do his duty, and it is no matter to him how Almighty God may arrange affairs about him. In sun or storm, in success or failure, God knows best. Lemans knows he is a lonely pawn on the board, and he is contented so.

One result of all this is that it is none too easy to get him to talk much about his work. He would never write a book about it, and I suppose he would never allow himself to write to any one as I am writing to you. That is the queer thing about people like Lemans. Supposing he met you, he could hardly possibly do other than love you, could he? And although, of course, you are you to me, I should have thought he might have met some one somewhere who would flutter his dove-cot for him. If he did, what would he do? He would be in this, as in other things, so much greater than I, I suppose, that this too would be crushed out of sight, or, shall we say, poured out as a sacrifice to Almighty God. If so, would he be wise, or would he be foolish?—that is the question.

Most of us are tempted to say, foolish, and I tell you honestly I am not sure that he is not, only I object strongly to conventional humdrum, stodgy people, who acquiesce in *bourgeois* social and moral rules, calling him foolish. The kind of Englishman who would call Fr. Lemans foolish is the man who mistakes a fit of passion for love, and finds out his mistake, but settles down to ordinary middle-class married life, with the assistance of regular heavy meals, and a business. To my mind that man is a thousand

times more of a fool. Lemans makes a sacrifice for the sake of an ideal ; the other fellow lives without ideals for the sake of conventions. He is neither a decent Christian nor an honest pagan. I think, if I hate any one, I hate him.

But there is something in the creed of the honest pagan. The sunshine is so good, flowers are so gay, the grass is so green, the world so wide, human nature so lovable, and God so remote. When I think of these things, I wonder often if the creed of the Cross is not a mistake. I remember how the little waves laugh in the sun on the white sands of green coral islands set in the blue sea ; I remember how the moon comes up over the desert, transforms the hovels, illuminates the minarets, and glistens on the great fronds of the palms ; I remember how the wild flowers gleam in the grass under the tall beeches of the forests of the Ardennes ; yes, and I remember the tinkle of laughter and the chink of glasses on the marble-topped tables of the boulevards, while the taxi-lights twinkle down the wide streets, and Paris is Paris. Just to live for all these, and, much more, with you, would it not be good ? Would it not even be right ? Where and who is God that the shadow of Him should darken our paths ? After all, did He not make these things, and did He not mean us to

dance our little May-fly lives in the good sun of His creation? At least, He never meant us to live in a suburban villa with half a dozen yards of smoky shrubs in front and the next-door neighbour's gramophone sounding through the thin wall, and with our lives bounded by office or shop. He could not have meant us to pass the golden days mere moving cogs in the great heedless machine which the greed of modern man has made, and in which so many dwarfed souls acquiesce.

But the biggest proof that Fr. Lemans is right is set forth in those books which picture the wonderful tenderness and good humour and love that can exist in such surroundings. Perhaps you do not see the connection, but I believe it is there. Books like Mr. Riley's, that picture the unselfishness that can exist in a Bradford slum, are the finest testimonies on earth to the reality of the soul, and if the soul is real, then God is real, and self-sacrifice is real, and ideals are real. Then it is better to have an ideal and endure for it than to have no ideal and laugh in the sun. It is better that one's soul should grow through pain and discipline than that it should be lulled to sleep with the song of birds and the magic soundlessness of the moon and stars.

The amazing thing is that such ideals can

become so much more dominant than the world in which we live. Even I know that. I can travel among these mountains and see no beauty in the rocks and krantzies, no laughter in the flick of the little lizards that dart across the way, no peace in the widening valleys, and no joy in the wind. Or I can travel when the driving rain makes me laugh, and to be forced to camp on some barren summit, when there is next to nothing for the fire and still less for the pot, is just a joke. I can hardly bear the sight of Cyril and his people sometimes, and at others I can smile at their stupidity and feel myself moved to heartfelt tenderness by their sin. Why, do you say? Why, because if there be light in the soul, the whole wide world is good; and if there be darkness, there is no sun in a tropic sky. And we are all like that. You are, I know.

But, oh, what pitiful playthings of the great Powers we all are, too! Even our ideals deceive us, and what is to be done when ideals clash? Suppose there is a girl somewhere whose ideal is Fr. Lemans and his love, while his ideal is that grim blackened cross! Can religion dictate to her that her ideal must be the cross likewise? Has it that dread right, I wonder? I lay opposite the good priest and imaged it—a little home in France under a laughing Provençal sky and

a hard-faced middle-aged peasant woman from whom vanished a score of years ago the hope and light of life. I daresay she is regular at mass, and I can see her set face over her beads. She works from sunrise to sunset; and before the kitchen fire in the evenings, when the big pot simmers and the peaceful cat basks in the warmth, she sees grim pictures of what might have been, and what must be, in the flames. There are many such for one cause and another, are there not? Patriotism, Love, Religion—what monsters they are! Men dare and die for them, and their names are written on the scrolls of History, but what of the pitiful victims they have crushed beneath their feet?

I believe there are fools who quibble at the Garden of Eden story, but what fools they are! If ever a world lay under a curse, it is this. Probably Lemans is right, and we deserve it and must accept it. Probably he is right also when he thinks that the good God is far more sorry than we, that His Heart is very pitiful, and that He is preparing a better place for us. It cost Him the Cross to do it, and it will cost us the cross to reach it. That is the Catholic Religion. And, like the Berg, there are days when it is very lovely and days when it is very cruel.

XVII

OF TERESA

YESTERDAY I wrote you a letter that ended rather sadly, but I began by saying that I had expected a delightful day. It had been delightful, although I did not feel like it when I came to take up my pen to write to you. But I mean to tell you now what made it so delightful apart from the fact that I had met dear old Fr. Lemans. For in the morning we set out together, and his tongue was unusually loose, or rather it became loosened as we rode, and he told me one or two delightful stories that it does one good to hear.

He began as we passed a village high up on the hillside. We were riding low down in the valley, and he had visited the place the day before. He pointed it out to me and said: "That's one of my places—about a hundred souls altogether, and practically every one a Christian."

"Oh," said I, "it's rather remarkable to find a village wholly Christian. I suppose they were your people down below and trekked up here?"

"No," he replied, "it's altogether a different story. Care to hear it?"

Of course I said I should, and he told me what follows :

Fifteen years or so ago there was only one Catholic in that place, an old widow, who lived much alone, and whom Fr. Lemans used to come and visit two or three times a year when he was in these parts. For seven years he came, and each time he was well received, preached to the heathen, and gave the Sacraments to this woman ; but there was never a convert. As always, it was not that the people had any other definite faith or that they disbelieved what he told them, but only that they preferred polygamy and the rest of it, and apparently the Holy Spirit was not moving in their hearts.

One evening, then, towards the end of that time, he was sitting in his hut in the village after supper and saying his office, having come for one of his visits. There came a knock at the door, and he put his finger in the book to mark the place and said : " Come in."

The old widow entered. She sat down, and for a while she had nothing but commonplaces to say. He began to wonder why she had come, as he had already talked with her and heard her confession, when she said suddenly (to put it into vernacular English): " Look here, Father, this can't go on ! "

“What can't go on?” he demanded in astonishment.

“Why,” she explained, “here have you been coming to this village two or three times a year for seven years. Each time you preach to the heathen, and they listen, and when you have gone they say how true your words are and that doubtless they ought to become Christians. But they do not. Once I thought the wife of Mojakasane (for so I will call the headman) would become a hearer, but she caught a fever in the winter instead, and died. And now I grow old; it cannot be that I have many more years to live. When I die, you will not come so much, if at all, to this place, and it is plain to me that we must do something.”

She stopped, out of breath. It was a long speech for her. Fr. Lemans wondered what was coming, but he tried not to show it. Instead he said: “Well, but what can we do? I do not know what else to say, and you pray for them regularly, do you not?”

“Yes,” she said, “but, Father, the Holy Saints did more. I am no saint, but a sinful old woman, yet is my life my own, and I have plenty of time. Now, if it seems good to the priest, let me offer myself to God for these people. I am too old and too ignorant to

become a nun, but could I not live up here in some such way as the good sisters live down below? And maybe God would see, if I gave myself altogether to Him, and would have mercy on these my people."

"What would you propose?" asked Fr. Lemans curiously.

The old woman hesitated. "It is little I can do, O Father," she said apologetically. "But did not our Lord tell us in the Holy Gospel to fast and pray? If now I prayed at night, and before the sun is up, and at sunrise, and at midday, and when the sun is near setting, and at sunset, and before I sleep, and if I did not eat until sunset three times a week, and then but *shilly-shilly*, maybe our Lord would have respect to my petition."

"But you cannot read," objected the priest. "So what would you pray? And what would you eat on the other three days?"

"Let not the priest think me foolish," deprecated the old woman. "It is only I, old Teresa, that speak. It is true I cannot pray the prayers of the sisters, but I can say the rosary; and I am old and thin: on the other days I need not eat."

I suspect that Fr. Lemans was startled out of his habitual calm, but he did not show it. "You

could not do so much," he said almost roughly. "You would fail and break your rule. It is better to aim at less and to succeed."

Tears came to old Teresa's eyes. "No, my father," she pleaded. "Let me but try. And do you ask the good sisters to pray for me down below that I may not fail."

He told me that he consented, and that when she had gone happily away he went out and stood under the stars. And a fragment from the Holy Gospel came to his mind: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

So next morning at mass Teresa made her vow, and knelt on as in a trance while he packed up his goods. Nor did she speak as he left.

It was towards the end of the season, and he went straight back the four days' journey to Roma. A few weeks later the snows fell, and a hard winter set in. Well, to conclude it, he was at the midday meal one day, when he was told a native wanted to speak with him. He went out and found a herd-boy whom he did not recognise. "*Lumela*, my son," he said, "whence come you?"

"I come from Mojakasane's, O Father," said the boy, "and I bring the words of Teresa the old. She sayeth: 'If the father will, let him come speedily, for I die.'"

“Is she very ill?” demanded Fr. Lemans, looking at the snow and thinking that it was four days’ trek even in summer.

“She has not left her house these many weeks,” said the boy, “and I heard my mother say that she could not live.”

So Fr. Lemans went back to the house and saw the Bishop, and he gathered his things and his pack, and that same afternoon he set out. He did not say anything to me of the journey, but I could fill in the gap. I know a little what the mountains are like when the wind blows over the snow and the days are short. But on the sixth day he arrived at the village.

They were looking out for him. Mojakasane greeted him.

“Did the priest come by the lower road across the drift yesterday?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Fr. Lemans. “Why do you ask?”

“Then Teresa had a true dream and saw him yesterday,” said the man. “She saw him when his horse stumbled by the bank on the ice, and she cried out lest the father should slip off.”

Fr. Lemans stared at him, for it was so. “Lead me to her,” he said shortly. “You talk much, Mojakasane.”

She lay on her blankets, very thin and very

feeble, and he saw that she was indeed dying. He crossed over to her, and kneeled by her side. "Praise to our Lady!" said she weakly. "I knew the priest would be in time."

He gave her the Sacraments then and there, and she seemed stronger after them. When all was over, she held his hand and said sadly: "Oh, my father, thou wert right, and I was wrong. I should not have expected that God would listen to the prayers of such as I. Now I die, for He does not wish me so to live."

Fr. Lemans was much moved. "Teresa," he said, "you must not speak so. Who can tell the Mind of God? His ways are past finding out. What you have done you have done lawfully and in faith; let us leave it with Him."

At that she was a little comforted, and at last slept, but just before she fell asleep she said to him after a long silence: "If but one had been converted, I should know that God had had respect unto my prayers."

"Teresa," he said again, "you cannot know the Will of Almighty God."

After a little he left her, for he too was very tired, and he did not wake until in the dawn a woman came to him. "Teresa is dead," she said. "We thought she slept, but we find that she is dead."

He stayed for the funeral, and watched rather sadly while they threw in the hard earth. Even then, he told me, he did not expect what would be. But as he left the place Mojakasane came up to him.

“Father,” he said, “I would become a hearer . . .”

“That was seven years ago,” Fr. Lemans added. There was a church there now, and all had become Catholics these several years. Her grave lay just beyond the east wall of the church; “but,” said he, “I think her place is with the holy saints.”

We did not speak for several miles after that. Then I asked if he had seen such faith and devotion in many of his flock. “No,” he said, “in very few. There was one case of a young man—you might like to hear that—but for the most part they do not seem to have it in them, not yet, at any rate,” he added tranquilly. “It is no use looking for flowers before a great deal has been done, and even after the ploughing and sowing it is first the blade and then the ear. At present we are not much beyond the young plant stage, and it is a difficult country. The seedlings have many enemies; but we can wait.”

I nodded. It is so. But it is rather beautiful

that there should be even one such story possible up here on the hard, rough Berg. It is not a story that would count for much among the people who deal in gold and diamonds and sway the destinies of this country, nor, for that matter, would I care to tell it to most of the people I might meet in your drawing-room, my dear. But I am glad to have been able to tell it to you. I think, deep down in your heart, you will rather treasure it, though you hear so much of the other side of missions, and I suspect you of laughing a little even at me at times! She would have been the roughest of diamonds, you know. I expect she wore the dozen or more of skirts beloved of Basuto women, ate her porridge with her fingers, and spat vigorously from time to time on the floor. Yet of such is the Kingdom of God, and, to be honest, I tell you the story that the work she did therein may not be limited to Mojakasane's village.

XVIII

OF WILFRID

I SHALL first tell you the thing as he told it me, and you can make your own comments, if indeed you want to make any. You can guess how hard it is for a parson not to point a moral, but I have done that so many times in these letters that now I shall refrain. It is Fr. Lemans who speaks—you remember Fr. Lemans?—and he is speaking to me as I lie stretched out on the grass outside old Mallont's store watching the drying of my blankets in the hot sun, which is very necessary, seeing that Spider chose to attempt the swimming of a river with them on his back but yesterday. It is not done by respectable pack-horses fully loaded. But then, as you have doubtless often felt, none of us in my little outfit are over-respectable. I have forgiven Spider because he thus won for me a day's rest and this story, and I hope you will, too, before it is finished. So now :—

(Fr. Lemans.) Yes, I agree with you about native teachers. They must have supervision at this stage, and our present systems of education are not planned for the Bantu, worse luck!

But it isn't only education they want. For it's not too often one finds a Christian native with a real vocation to the ministry. I fear they think a great deal about the money and the position . . . Priests? Well, of course, we've no native priests on the Berg, not yet. Nuns, yes, but not priests. Of course they would have to be celibate and members of an order. They'd get their clothes and their food. They would have no lands, no wife, no children, no cattle. If priesthood with you meant that, how many of your natives would come forward, do you suppose?

But I've known one vocation—a rather striking affair. I think once, talking about old Teresa, I just hinted at it to you. I'll tell you the story if you like.

It was a few years ago now, and I was up here for a baptism. We had had our three days' retreat in the village, and after the Sacrament I was going to my hut, when a boy came up and said he wished to speak to me. I stopped. "All right," I said. "What is it?"

"I cannot tell the father here," he said. "Let us go to his house."

So we went to my house, and we both sat down. The boy plunged into it straight away. "I want to be a Catholic, Father," he said.

I told him I was glad to hear it, that he must come to the classes regularly and start at once to say his prayers, and I wrote his name down. Just the usual thing, you see, and when I had finished I expected him to go, but not a bit of it; he sat on.

“Well,” I said, “what next?”

“I want to tell the father why I want to repent,” he replied, “if the father will listen to me.”

I was rather tired, but I told him the father would listen, and he told me this tale.

“A week ago, my father, I was asleep in my hut. I was a heathen, and I had not been much to church. Suddenly I awoke, and I saw that there was some one in the room. I could just see that there was some one, but no more. I was sleeping in a little hut alone, and the hut was nearly full of wheat bags and skins, so that I thought perhaps a man had come in to steal. Therefore I cried out loudly: ‘Who is it?’ There was no answer, and as I was about to speak again, still rolled up in my blankets—for I feared to get up—I noticed a wonderful thing. The figure was getting plainer, and there seemed to be a light about it. I was frightened, and although I tried to shout loudly, I could only whisper: ‘Who is it?’ once more.”

“ Then, my father, while I watched, the figure grew very plain. It moved over to me, and it was a man, and there was a light in his breast. He came close to me and looked at me, and I looked into his eyes, and as I looked I knew that I must be his servant. He did not speak, but he lifted one hand and pointed to the light on his breast, and I saw that beneath his coat there was the likeness of a heart, on fire and red. And then, as I stared, he said to me three times very distinctly : ‘ Wilfrid, thou hast not chosen Me, but I have chosen thee.’ Each time as he said it I saw him less clearly, and I heard less clearly, and at the last I could hardly see his face or hear his words. And afterwards I saw him no more.”

The boy stopped. Now you know these native visions and dreams as well as I do. I daresay, if it had happened to me when I first came out, I should have been much impressed, but now—well, I had been in the mountains many years, and I knew how often these people are converted by dreams. I thought to myself that the boy had seen such a picture many times; and as for the rest—ah, well, the good God knows! What shall we say?

So I was not very surprised—impressed you would say. No, but I would not hurt the boy, so I said : “ Yes, it is plain God has called you.

You saw our Lord of the Sacred Heart. Whom do you know by the name of Wilfrid ? ”

“ The father speaks true,” he said. “ This very day, when he held up the new picture, I saw again the man of my dream. That is why I have come to the father now. As for the name ‘ Wilfrid,’ I do not know it at all, but it is plain it is to be my name when I am baptised.”

I heard him in silence. I thought to myself that I would not question him more on either point, first that he had not seen a picture of the Sacred Heart before, and secondly that he had not heard the name of Wilfrid. You know these people. They often lie ; whether they mean all their lies, who can say ? Perhaps he truly thought he had not seen the picture ; perhaps he only meant that he had not understood Who it was. It was a little thing, and besides the dream was only one among many that I had heard. So I asked no questions. I said : “ Good-night,” and perhaps a few words more, and the boy went. The thing passed, too, almost from my mind.

But as time went on I began to notice Wilfrid, as I shall call him at once. I used to see him three or four times a year, and always he was at Roma for Easter. He was very quiet, and he was very good. He learnt most quickly, so much that he

knew all that he had to know for Baptism before he was even a catechumen. For all that, I would not hurry. I made him wait, and for two years I watched him more and more, until I was very interested when the time came for his Baptism.

He came to Roma for it, as he was most anxious to do, and I have never before or since seen any native so devout. He prayed always before the Sacrament, and when he made his confession I wondered for the light there was in his soul. After it he did not at once go ; instead he said to me, but hesitatingly : " Father, there is something I would say to thee."

" Say on, my son," I said.

" Dost thou remember the vision of our Lord which I told thee whereby I was called into the Church ? " he asked.

" Yes," I said, " I do. It was a great mercy of the good God, and you should give Him great thanks."

He nodded eagerly. " It is so, my father," he said. " But my thanks are little. What are my *words*, that I should be able to thank ? Moreover, our Lord spoke to me, and I have yet to obey His words."

" You are to be baptised to-morrow," I said, " Surely in that you will obey them."

“In that I shall,” he replied. “But—let my father forgive me—I do not think they will be finished then.”

“What do you mean?” I demanded, for I had had no such case before.

“I would be a priest, Father,” he said.

Now at that I was astonished. As I have said, it was more than I would have expected. I knew that the boy knew well enough what it meant—our people of course do—and I was silent, thinking for a while. Then I spoke, and it was plain immediately that I had said the right thing.

“You are the one son of your father, and he is a heathen; is it not so, Wilfrid?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said.

“What, then, will your father, the headman, say when he hears that his son will not raise up children to his name?” I demanded.

“I fear to tell him,” said the boy simply.

Well, of course, you know as I do what children mean to a native. I saw trouble looming ahead, and I also saw the greatest temptation for the lad. Thinking quickly, I thought to myself once more that while I ought not to discourage him, I had better not make too much of it. So I said: “Look here, Wilfrid, to-morrow you will be washed from your sin. After that go home and see how you can live as a Christian. Say

no more to any one, and on the day you first receive the Blessed Sacrament we will speak of these things again.”

He came from the font next day with shining eyes, and he went off home with the rest. But this time I remembered and prayed for him.

Months later he wrote me a letter. In it he said his father was urging him to marry, and had chosen the girl, but that he had begged for nothing to be done till after Easter, when he would be at Roma for his first communion. I read that letter several times. It did not say much, but somehow it said a great deal. Then, like the Jewish King, I went into the Sanctuary to spread it out before the Lord.

Easter came, and with it Wilfrid. We were very busy, we priests, of course, and I had no chance in Holy Week to speak with him. But it was I who gave him the Blessed Sacrament on Easter Day, and I just noticed that his eyes were fast closed as I placed the Host on his tongue. And that evening he came to speak to me.

He came into my room and remained standing before me. He was very quiet, but his eyes shone; they shone as I have never thought to see, but as I have read of eyes shining in the lives of the holy ones; indeed, they shone so that I did not speak. But he began at once.

“This morning,” he said, “He Whom I saw before came to me with the Blessed Sacrament Himself. He did not speak at all, but I looked into His eyes, and I saw there, my father, what I had seen before, and more. Oh, my father, I cannot marry : I must keep myself for Him, only for Him. And I have come to thee that thou mayest help me, my father.”

Now I was in a difficulty. I thought quickly. We had no place for him, and, moreover, I still wondered myself as to his vocation. If I was wrong, God forgive me. There had already been talk of his going to school, but his father would pay no fees, and he had no money. What could be done? Then I thought that possibly they would take him in Natal, only I could not say at once, and, besides, it would mean seeing the Bishop and much correspondence.

“Wilfrid,” I said, “if our Lord wants you to be a priest, He will help you. Go back home now, and I will see what I can do. Refuse to marry, and I will write to you as soon as I have anything to suggest. If you have a real vocation, never forget it, and keep yourself from all hindrances.”

“I will, my father,” he said. “Besides, this morning I vowed myself to our Lord.”

He spoke very quietly, and he did not again

emphasise his immediate difficulties, so that I did not think more of them. I was doubtful over the wisdom of his vow, and I wondered what he had said, but I judged it best to say little. Perhaps I was foolish; God knows. Still; all I said was "God keep you, Wilfrid, and our Lady have you in her prayers."

"I think so, Father," he said quaintly after the native manner, and we talked of a few indifferent things. Then he went.

About Christmas, if I remember rightly, a man came down from his village, and I asked after Wilfrid. "He is gone to the mines in the City of Gold," he said.

I was genuinely astonished and sorry. I questioned him, but got no answer that threw any light on the affair. He did not know Wilfrid's address, and I could only pray that God would keep him in the midst of such great peril to his vocation, if, indeed, he had one, which I now began again to doubt. And a year went by.

One day I came back from a two months' trek, and after greetings one of the fathers said to me: "Oh, by the way, there is a boy dying in the hospital who much wants to see you. He comes from the mountains somewhere."

"What is his name?" I asked, and they told me. It was, of course, Wilfrid, and he was

dying of rapid consumption, caught in the mines. He had been brought in at his own request to die in our hospital.

I went at once to see him, and I hardly knew him, so shrunken and thin he was. But there was still the light in his eyes, for which I thanked God. We could talk only a little, and I promised to bring him the Blessed Sacrament next day, but he was very weak. I did not like to question him about his going to the mines. Nor did he say anything, and so we parted.

But that very night I was sent for, about midnight, with a request to go to him with the Sacraments. I hurried to the church and then to the hospital, and I found him indeed plainly dying. But he was radiant. He knew the end was coming, and it seemed to me that he had something he was anxious to say the while I administered the last rites to him. And when they were over, it came out. "I had to go to the mines, Father," he said, "or my father would have forced me into the marriage. As it is he has already paid the cattle for the girl, and she is waiting at my place. He wrote to tell me of it while I was there, in the City of Gold, and then I did the only thing I could do: I threw myself on our Lord, and I begged that He would not forget that He had chosen me. And quickly

this sickness came, O my father, and now I go to Him. Oh, yes, grieve thou not, for—*for He has chosen me.*”

He was very weak, and he could say no more. I just held his hand, and I think I said that I understood. He lay with closed eyes till the dawn, while I watched and wondered if he would speak again. But he did not with his lips. Only, just as he died, his eyes opened wide again, and there was that in them more radiant still of which I cannot speak.

“ They shall come from the east and the west and the north and the south, and sit down with Me in the Kingdom of My Father.”

“ And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred, forty and four thousand, having His Father’s Name written on their foreheads. . . . These are they which are virgins, and which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.”

XIX

OF SOME SICK VISITS

THIS has been a morning of sick-visiting, and I am spending an afternoon of soaking rain writing to you about it. After mass and a scrap of breakfast we started, the catechist and I, I carrying the Blessed Sacrament. The school-children had lined up very simply and naturally outside, making a kind of avenue from the church door to my horse, held by Cyril, and as I came out, bearing our Lord, they all fell on their knees. Cyril held my bridle while I got on; then he too knelt on the stones. And without words the catechist wheeled his pony and rode off, and I followed.

It was the sort of morning that you love, and I thought of you incessantly, despite What I carried, as we went. We had not to go down to the river, but up and round the mountain, in and out of clefts, over shoulders, up crests, mile after mile. We were soon high above the Mission and up in a magical world of clouds. The storms, blanketed in white mist, would come sweeping down on us, hiding the river valley far below, till we wandered, at that

height, seemingly on the roof of the world. It is still very early spring here, and, save that the grass is green, the country looks dead—not a tree, not a flower, nothing of that verdant, luxurious vegetation which in the semi-tropical summer will clothe the course of the little mountain streams, nothing but the irregular scraps of ploughed land, dotted here and there on the hillside, without hedge or boundary stones, and the bleak mountain sides. It certainly was not pleasant going. First we were wet; then the wind would dry us; then round the peaks would come the swishing mists again, and we would be once more wet; then again we were dried and had a snatch of sunlight; and then, just as it was beginning to rain again, we made a dash for it and reached the huts.

You would not think people would, or perhaps even could, live up here. In comparison with the plains below, any of these Berg villages, such as that near the church, seem grim, small, and poverty-stricken, but in comparison with that, these that we had been passing on our three-hour ride were much smaller and poorer again. Yet it is surprising how many people there are here, in almost every mountain fold a hut or two, and here four huts make a village.

It was such a village we had reached, and in the four huts live a dozen adults at least. They came flocking, with the children too. The tiny hut was ready for me, swept and partly emptied, with skins on the floor and a rough, home-made wooden stool waiting for transformation into an altar. The folk crowded in, "rough souls" and poor, but I mean it when I say wise souls and rich. Listen while I tell you.

I had come to give Communion to a sick crippled woman of middle age who cannot walk at all. I draped the stool and placed my cross and candle, robed myself, and was ready. It comes almost as a shock to find how familiar they are with the prayers in so remote a place, these Christians of ours who have certainly learnt wonderfully these last few years, what time they have assumed Mary-medals and rosaries. But I shall not write of that, rather of a little incident at the close.

The vestments were off at last, and I came to shake hands with the cripple. She, however, was fumbling with a dirty rag beneath her clothes, and at last produced a small bundle. Many knots had to be wrestled with, but finally a coin appeared, and was held out to me for "collection." I took it, wondering; it was a sovereign. "Do you want change?" I

asked, and doubtfully, for I had none. This, however, she did not even understand, and it had to be explained at great length, for she had never changed a coin in her life. When she understood, she emphatically refused, and, as I stood still doubtfully turning over the gold, I was told the story.

It appears that I communicated her before, three years ago, before I went to the war in East Africa, and that that had been her first communion. When I had left, she had been much troubled because she had had no money offering to make. She never had had a coin. A cripple, and of course unmarried, she had just existed in that tiny village, fed and clothed in rags by somewhat grudging relations, who had little use for such as she ; but, as I say, she had been much troubled over her lack of money for her offertory. Then, a year later, a brother came to see her on his way to his own village with the money of his year's wool and grain just sold at the store, and in a fit of generosity he had given her a pound. God knows what that sovereign must have represented to that woman ! Her friends could have bought her at the distant store sugar, and coffee, and beads, and a new piece of coloured stuff for her head, and sugar again, all but unlimited sugar. I fancy her turning it over

and over, questioning as to the store she had never seen (which, you know, is a wonderful palace of delights to these people) and as to the treasures potentially hers—and then remembering the collection. Of course it was a good chance that no priest would ever come her way again, as none, I suppose, now ever will, for I should think that she is dying. But she lapped the only money she ever had had in all her life in a dozen folds of rag, and hid it in her clothes against my possible return. And three years later it fell out that I came, and at her second communion she gave all her treasured fortune to her God. Oh, my dear, these poor rough souls! Perhaps I am an emotional fool, but I tell you I groped my way out of that hut blind for the moment with tears.

We struck off transversely to make a second visit, and this again was to a woman, recently baptised in sickness by the catechist. She lives in one of two huts perched up like an eagle's nest, and she turned out to be the oldest native that I have ever seen. She was crouching over a tiny dying fire in a hut full of smoke, babies, dogs, and chicken. There were many smells. I was given a seat on the floor, and promptly lit a cigarette.

That started it, for she had never seen a

cigarette before. It seemed to me amazing to find a creature so remote from the world, especially as she can hobble about a bit and has all her faculties. But soon it appeared that I was only the second white man she had seen, except for a distant view of a Government Police Inspector on border patrol. (The other had been the R.C. itinerant priest who had visited a relation in some huts lower down, not long after the Boer war.) So all this led to talk, and I tried to find out her age.

Well, she had come there "long, long, long ago," when, as she said, there were practically no people in these mountains. She had fled with her son, since dead, when the "slayers" of her husband had been sent by the chief to eat up all that was his. In these remote mountains she had shaken off the bloodhounds, oh, "long, long, long ago." She had been old when the magistrate and the store, later on, had come into these parts, too old to go with the rest and see. She remembered the great Moshesh, as far as I could make out before he had consolidated his power. She must be easily a hundred years old, possibly a hundred and ten.

It is staggering to think of the period that that old soul's life has covered. When Wellington fought Napoleon she was alive, I daresay. She

was a woman before a white man crossed the Orange (unless it were some chance hunter), before the Voor-trekkers, before an ounce of gold had been found at Johannesburg, or a diamond at Kimberley. In those days there was neither steamship, nor train, nor bicycle, nor motor-car, nor aeroplane, nor breech-loading rifle, nor a tin of preserved food, nor a safety match, nor, I think, a safety pin, in the whole wide world. European soldiers still carried halberds into action (they did at Waterloo, you know); they still cut off limbs in cold blood and dipped the stump into boiling oil; and that most terrible of all beasts of prey, the bacillus, was still unguessed and unsubdued. And I believe I should be right in asserting that the only Church of England clergyman in what is now the Union of South Africa plus Rhodesia was a military chaplain at the Cape. Yet is even she now sought out in my unworthy person.

I asked whose were the figures on the medal she wore about her neck.

“Mary, the Mother of God,” she said, “and Jesus.”

“And Who is He?” I asked.

“God,” she said simply.

At that I wondered much, more than you can think. Here had I found in one morning two

souls richer far than some episcopal dignitaries of my Church.

Then we knelt to pray. I must say she is a unique and astounding old soul, for at a hundred she had been able to learn the "Our Father," the "Hail Mary," and the "Glory be to God." It may not seem much to garner in a hundred years, perhaps, and it is, I suppose, a frail enough equipment for the great journey that lies so soon before those tottering, hardened feet, but I think—don't you?—that it will carry her through.

I am quite willing to confess to you that the conditions of the after-world are utterly beyond my understanding. I accept Heaven and Hell, and a place of Purgation and Preparation, partly because the only authority that I can see in this world, or that I trust at all, teaches me so, and after all there is a measure of reason in them. It seems plain and reasonable, too, that there will be progression, and steps by which one will mount to the Throne of God; but otherwise I am a sheer agnostic. I preach and argue about spiritual things, it is true, and I can see, as it were, tags sticking out of the tangle which may perhaps straighten out into threads, but on the whole it is a conflicting and incomprehensible mystery. Often, among the people, I am entirely dazed by it, dumbfounded as to what men will make of

Almighty God or Almighty God of men. Paris, London, the worshippers in St. Paul's, as well as the professional girls of our modern streets, only add to my bewilderment. In my library there are books and books on the subject, the intellectual wealth of the world's universities, but frankly they do not help me much. Doubtless all this is largely my own fault and my own stupidity, but you, my dear, have confessed to me that you are in much the same boat. Hence I want to suggest to you two new teachers, a crippled woman and a centenarian, on the face of the Berg. They have learned so little, and they know so much.

XX

OF THE BISHOPS' PRAYERS

DO you know, I have never yet addressed a missionary meeting without having an uneasy feeling afterwards. I always feel as if I had created an entirely wrong impression, and I remember how distinctly I was aware of having had a wrong impression given me by many missionary meetings when I first came out to Africa. It is, of course, all but inevitable. A speaker necessarily selects interesting episodes, days that were at least days of action and in some sort successes, with which to occupy half an hour's talk, more especially when the financial aid of his work depends largely on that half-hour. He may be very far from wishing to create a false impression, indeed, personally, I have nearly always tried to emphasise the fact that I had to omit an account of the routine, the monotony, the failures, in my speeches ; but, try as he will, that other impression is created. You see, there are the colour, the beauty and the victory ; it would be wrong not to depict them ; others, after all—traders and officials—speak enough of the other side in the ears of the world ;

and perhaps it is impossible in half an hour to give a true vignette. I think that is it. I could not sketch the work on the Berg for you so that you might see it as I do looking back over the years, however much I tried.

But in these letters I begin to feel much as I used to do after a missionary meeting. Here have I been writing to you, evening by evening almost, the striking incidents of the twelve hours. Yet in each twelve there have been probably ten when I had no vision and no song, and for every day on which I could look back and say, "Well, I must write to her of this," there have probably been two when I rolled myself in my blankets, glad to sleep and forget. So, my dear, I begin to feel that you may be getting a wrong impression, and as to-day was one of the other kind of days (albeit even this with the leaven of humour), I intend to write it up faithfully for you.

It began this way. I slept at a store, as I had a round to do yesterday which landed me there after midday, and it seemed useless to go on another hour to the church when early this morning I should have to come again from the Mission past the store to reach yet another village in which there were our people. So I told the catechist to be very early, and turned in. I was up at six, dressed and in the saddle

half an hour later, and there I sat. At a quarter to eight the catechist turned up. It was a dull morning, and he quite cheerful and, I fancy, honestly unconscious of having wasted my hours. At 9.30 we reached the village. By this time I was tired and hungry and likely to be more so before I could in any way satisfy the needs of the body. The hut was just a hut, and no particular preparations had been made. However, I set up an altar and arranged everything, for, however poor the place and however simple the furnishings, it seems to me that nothing should lack for the coming of the King. Then I sat to hear the half-dozen confessions, sat with despair and, I fear, anger in my heart. One woman at least knew what she was about; the rest were quite hopeless. The last man repeated the Creed instead of the Confiteor, nor would he be switched out of it, and knew absolutely nothing of what he was there to do. He and the rest came because the catechist told them to do so, all but the first woman that is. Afterwards I got hold of him and began to instruct him, but then asked where he came from. He told me, and that he was going back in a few months. I gave it up then; I know that in that part of the Anglican Church they do not teach the Sacrament of Penance.

Well, then we began the mass. The hut was crowded, I of course at the altar, with the catechist to serve and lead the people's prayers. And the hopeless muddle he made of it! I was so distracted that I hardly knew what I was doing, and I should have been happier alone. Yet the fellow has had a year's training at a Catholic Training College, at my expense incidentally, which only shows that one year will not eradicate ten of ignorance and neglect.

There were a lot of heathen, and I preached to them. Somehow or other I was very moved and tried with all my heart to win them. At the end one man came up and said he would like to speak to me privately. So I took him aside. A convert? Oh no; he wanted me to give him an old coat.

And about twelve o'clock I had a crust of bread and a cup of so-called coffee, and after that honestly thanked God for the gift of tobacco.

Of course most of this was not the natives' fault. If I had recited, for example, the Prayer Book Service of Holy Communion straight through in a loud voice, the catechist would probably have said most of the "Amens" at the right time, and the people would dutifully have repeated them after him. Also they would have been able to repeat the General Confession in the

same way. That is what most of them are used to, and that is why most of them know nothing. My dear, I tell you my blood absolutely boils when I think of it. I fear I see red. Of course I have no right to do so ; in any case who and what am I so to criticise my elders and betters and the incomparable Prayer Book ? It has often been rubbed into me that it is mad and uncharitable so to do.

But the point is that for some reason or another our authorities will not understand the mental limitations of these people. (Forgive me if I write dogmatically, won't you ? It is only meant to be a forceful form of argument, you know.) They will not see that the language of the Book of Common Prayer, even in their own tongue, is utterly and entirely beyond them. Look here, it *is!* Image the folk in that hut to-day, five Christian women and one Christian man and some heathen, none of whom could read, none of whom ever mix with people of ideas, to whom, in that remote village perched on a crag of the Berg, practically no news of the world ever comes, and whose very vocabulary is limited to a few score words concerned with babies, mealies, cows, and sheep.

“ Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, Who of Thy tender mercy didst send Thine only

begotten Son to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption ; Who made there, by His one oblation of Himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world ; and didst institute and in His holy Gospel command us to continue a perpetual memory of that His Precious Death until His coming again . . .”—how much of that, beautiful as it is, do you think such people would understand ? Why, I dare to say that they do not know the meaning of half the words even in Sesuto, and as to following the complex grammatical construction—oh, but why go on ? I suppose our English fathers in God cannot disillusion themselves of the idea that because it is Sesuto therefore Basuto will understand it, yet they would have known, if they had been in France, that when it was English not one Tommy in ten understood it. Yet the most ignorant Tommy is a University professor compared to these my people.

To stand up, then, and recite all this in an even and audible tone, while the catechist follows with painful and painstaking energy in his book and blurts out “ Amen ” when it is indicated, is simply to waste one’s time. Yes, I have written it, and it shall stand. Of course the good native folk reckon that it is “ prayers,”

and that you are a white *moruti* and doubtless have power with God, and they will put on clean clothes and smile and shake hands and come miles for the same performance when you are about next time. But for all that it is waste of time. They learn nothing, and only by a miracle can grace filter through to their souls. I do not say that Almighty God will not and does not work such a miracle, but I do say that He does not expect us to jettison our intelligences and wait for it. Yet I have known a holy man spend three days in these parts, knowing that he will not get back in a year, and give up the public devotions of two of them to the recitation of complete Matins, with the utmost reverence and decorum and edification—to himself and the angels.

Of course I do not recite the Book of Common Prayer in that even and audible tone. I say the Canon of the Mass all but in silence. My own people and catechists know exactly what I am doing, thanks to the ritual and the bell. While I recite the first part the catechist says such words as these, and the people after him: "O Almighty God—Send Thy Holy Spirit; Change this Bread—into the Body of Jesus; Change this Wine—into the Blood of Jesus," and at any rate even the heathen know what

that means, and marvel. Then when the bell has rung, and the elevation has been made, again catechist and people speak: "O Lord Jesus—Thou art here—We worship Thee on the Altar; O Father in Heaven—Accept this Sacrifice—of Thy Son Jesus Christ—Who Died on Calvary—And is now on the Altar." And in the silent interval they do not need to be told to bow themselves in humble, trustful adoration.

You see the difference, I take it. I do not say that natives used to this could give you a theological disquisition on the Real Presence. I do not say that they even all believe it. I do not want to argue that it agrees or disagrees with ancient liturgies, and doubtless it is even horrifying to those who are still in eager and clamorous doubt as to the precise moment of our Lord's coming and the precise manner. But I do say that nobody is hindered, except by a lack of mental power which is too great an obstacle for anything short of a miracle to overcome (and there is such among the natives), from perceiving that the Church teaches, to quote from St. Chrysostom, that as the shepherds found our Lord in the stable, so do Christians find Him on the altar. The Saviour of the World, the Lamb of God, is lifted up then in such a way that the most ignorant may look and live.

My catechist this morning, not wholly used to such a mass, lost his head, clung to his Book of Common Prayer, rang bells wildly, forgot to say anything, and finally—at any rate, this is the perplexed native's usual saving grace!—said nothing. So after my communion I knelt down and said the easy prayers for him. Then I started to sing the "*Agnus Dei*," and that he was able to continue alone while I gave communion. That, too, they all did take up, although that again is not provided for in the rubrics of the Prayer Book. And—may I say it, my dear?—do you know that even then, perplexed, worried, and tired as I was, there suddenly stole over me a sense of the peace of God and of a Presence beyond all words? It is marvellous and wonderful how He comes again and again. It is against all reason to build an intellectual position on feeling, against all my reason at least to defend Anglican Orders by such an argument. I know it, and I have said it a score of times. But—well, perhaps there is a good deal in the words of the poet, after all:—

“The Love of God is wider than the measures of man's
mind,
And the Heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully
kind.”

Besides, of course, strict Roman theology allows

that, seeing I am acting in good faith and that the people believe, they are fed with the Food of the spiritual Body of Christ.

As we rode home Augustino spoke.

“ Why is it, Father,” he said, “ that the Prayer Book has so many long, hard prayers and so few short ones ? ”

“ Well, it was written for English people,” I said feebly.

Silence for a few minutes. Then—

“ The father’s prayers are very short and very beautiful. The people understand them.”

“ They are not my prayers especially,” I said. “ And besides any little prayers which you might repeat to Jesus when He comes would do instead, and be very likely better if you made them up yourselves. The priest, of course, has to say the hard, long prayers, but the people can talk to our Lord in their own way from their heart.”

“ It is so, Father,” he said, “ but this people is very ignorant. Why, even I grow muddled (!). Will not the father write an easy prayer-book for us, that we can understand ? ”

“ He will not,” the father replied.

“ Why not ? ” he demanded.

I looked at him. What could I say ? How could I tell him that one such was already

written ; but that it would be disloyal to give it him ? How could I explain that its doctrine would not meet with general favour ? How could I account for the fact that, as no two priests of the Anglican Communion ever celebrate alike, it would tend to be a sectarian action if I were to publish such a book, and in any case be all but locally useless ? So—

“ It is the work of the Bishops,” I said.

“ When will they do it, then ? ” he demanded.

“ I do not know,” said I.

Do you, my dear ? Between ourselves, does anybody ?

XXI

OF A DISPUTED QUESTION

I AM writing down for you to-day what I wrote mentally yesterday, so that I shall write in the historic present. It is a most wonderful night of stars and moon, O, my friend, and I have not allowed Cyril to pitch my tent in order that I may take it all in. We are up again on the great hill-tops, having been down to the Berg Camp, for, I suppose, the last time. The moon is so bright that I can see rocks and grass and a little stream leaping and tumbling in molten silver. The horses graze just over yonder, and the night is so still that I can hear them cropping the grass and moving leisurely about. The stars are beyond my pen. I am on my back staring up at them, and if I stare long enough I leave the earth altogether and start off up to them. I can veritably feel the solid world swinging away under me, and I am just poised, or swiftly fleeting, through the viewless wastes of air. But I never make any appreciable headway, and, as you can guess, when I give the effort up in despair, I find that I have not even moved. All of which, my dear,

is a parable of many things and not the least of what I must needs write to you.

Do you know, I am singularly happy. I suppose I ought not to be. I pinch myself again and again mentally to try to feel hurt, but it is no good. I *am* happy, and there is an end to it. I suppose I am happy because after great mental stress it is such a relief to come to a conclusion, and the people who would be annoyed with me for coming to this conclusion, are really the people who have no idea of what mental agony can be. Do you not think honestly that the people who call us poor Catholic-minded clergy of the Church of England hypocrites and traitors are rather hard? They can never have known what it is to strive to see the right between conflicting claims till your brain reels, and your mind is in torment, and death would quite strictly be as much of a relief to you as it was sometimes to those poor souls on the rack. The very rack itself was less than the torment of the mind that honestly wants to do right and is not sure, and cannot, cannot see.

And now, for some reason or another, I feel I see, not very much, but enough, and I am so happy, after all.

But this is rather putting the cart before the horses, is it not? To begin properly, I have just

paid my last ministerial visit to the Europeans at the Camp. You must picture the Camp—the Government Reserve with its half-dozen European houses of officials and its two or three stores, not much in London, but a great deal when you are trekking on the Berg. Lest anything I may say should read rudely, do let me write it down at once that kinder, more hospitable, or more straightforward people I do not wish to meet than those at this Camp. They are all English, I think, for the most part the Public School breed grafted on a colonial stock. Heavens! I believe I have put my foot in it! But what I mean is, men bred at home in the Public School, yet somewhat more easy and open-hearted as a result of our mountains and stars and winds. You could hardly better that.

I am happy, then, not because I have paid my last visit to them, but because it is my last ministerial visit. There are still days of trek ahead, but I have done with the Camp. Four days in all have I been there, and on the Sunday, as usual, I celebrated the Holy Communion, and then, later, said Matins and preached. The previous Sunday I was among natives, as I shall be the next, and it is because I have done with the serving of two religions that I am glad. For, my dear, stripped of all the study cobwebs, that

is what it is. I am a Catholic priest (in theory) on the Berg; I am a Protestant minister (in fact) in the Camp. And the two religions are not beautifully complementary; they are very decidedly contradictory.

Up on the Berg, as you must have seen by now from these letters, I just teach and act in accordance with my faith, and I give the natives the simple, straightforward Catholic religion. Up there Jesus comes to the altar in His own adorable real Presence, and the bread when He has come is only truly Bread if you write it with a capital B as one of His names. The offering of Him is a propitiatory Sacrifice for the living and the dead. Forgiveness is nothing other than the plan of God, the Sacrament of Penance. The companionship of the saints, and particularly of the most holy Mother of God, is our happiness and strength, and a God-given means of grace. That is my faith up there.

Has it ever struck you what such as I have to do in the Camp? Believing all this, we have to act as if we did not. I tell the good folk that they ought "most chiefly" to confess their sins when they assemble and meet together; and I do not believe it. I have to place our Lord's Body in the hands of those who believe the Sacrament to be no more than bread. I have to

offer the propitiatory sacrifice of the mass, not in the words of the ancient Western rite which makes no doubt of it at all, but in the improved phraseology of a turncoat archbishop who most definitely believed the very contrary, or, at any rate, wrote in such a way that people who did so disbelieve might still happily attend the service. And I have studiously to ignore the intercession of the whole company of heaven as if that was a matter of no importance, and I have to squeeze my own prayers for the dead into a crevice in the prayer for the Church Militant here on earth. Now what is this but the serving of two religions ?

Of course some of my friends in the ministry would declare that I did wrong ; that I ought either definitely to teach my faith and use the " additional devotions " (how that phrase makes me smile, because they are so very additional that there is mighty little left of the original !) which I use among the natives, or else that I ought to stick to the Prayer Book, perhaps, but make it quite clear, in sermon and manner, what I hold. Possibly I do attempt the last in some degree, but I am a sad coward, and, what is more, I believe I am cursed with some ability to see both sides of a question. " After all," I say to myself, " these good folk have been brought up

in their faith by wiser, older, and more learned divines than I, and that same Protestant faith of theirs is still professed, unrebuked and even honoured, in the Church at home by other wiser, older, and more learned divines." Here, too, there is no choice of a low or a high church, so that if I drove them from the altar (as in some cases even my moderate and tentative ministry has done, and as, if I did otherwise, I surely should) they would have nowhere else to go.

Even more, I can never escape from the conviction that they are more right than I. It is all very well. Cranmer and Parker and Whitgift would have had no use for me. I fear that even Laud would have been distressed could he have journeyed with me on the Berg these last few months. Still more, even if you reckon that this is a disputed question, it *is* a disputed question. I mean that I hold to one historic interpretation of the Prayer Book, and I have taken my stand on the supposition that it is meant to allow Catholicism at the least; that one may supplement it; that it is the *Romish*, and not the Catholic, doctrine of mass and relic and Purgatory that the Articles forbid. But a third unbiassed person, having respect to the weight of learned opinion on either side, would surely feel that the question was still in dispute, and that

therefore it is rough of me to act as if it were closed with these lonely Englishmen of a different opinion on the face of the Berg.

The question that confronts such as I am, therefore, is a singularly difficult one. It is a choice between a right and a wrong each way, and it seems impossible to get both the rights on the same side. Am I to accept what might truly seem the call of God and, so accepting, minister in a false position, or am I to make the position honest but as a result cease to minister? That is the present moral quandary, and you have to add to it the continual worry as to whether one's judgment about the Church of England at all is right or wrong—as to whether she is or is not a living part of the Catholic Church. Surely we are more to be pitied than most men, especially when we labour under the frown of those in high places and in an unsympathetic and hostile atmosphere.

You may ask, my dear, why I feel I have settled the matter now. The answer is very simple: the Berg has done it for me. Its silence and majesty and unchangeableness seem to have been saying in my soul: "You complicate matters! You try to bear God's burden! You worry too much! Just you do what is plainly right, and be still." And it is perfectly

plain to me that it is wrong to serve two masters and profess two religions at once, and that the double-facedness of the Anglican Church is no honest position for a person who has made up his mind. My mind, such as it is, is made up. Like my people up here, I know perfectly well that the ignorance, rudeness, and need of my soul are satisfied by the Catholic religion, and by that alone. In the Church of my birth the truth of the Catholic religion is held in suspense. Question her as you will, there is no voice nor any that answers, unless the answer she gives is "I don't know," or "I shan't tell," which is, as a matter of fact, what the average man understands her to say. So long, then, as that is so, I am faced with the intolerable position of the Camp and the Berg, and I am bound to be in full communion with those who deny what I believe, and whose denials have the approbation of the Church behind them as much as or more than my affirmations. You may have seen the reasons which the Bishop of Delaware has so ably given for his resignation of office and ministry in the Church of England in America. I cannot better them, unless it be to add that I leave also for something of the reason that St. John is alleged to have left the Public Baths when he knew that Cerinthus was inside!

But you may still think it strange that I should be happy when such action involves so much—the leaving of these people of mine up here, of whom I have now written to you often, especially. Should I be? I wonder. You see, I have never been able to get away from the feeling that I have been deceiving them all along, for I have been coaxing them into a sheep-fold alleged to be secure against wolves when I know that the wolves actually lurk there. To cut out metaphors, you cannot think what such work is like. Anglican Church natives trek up here from elsewhere and find a different religion from that in which they were brought up. Trained catechists come to me, and I take them on, and then have to set about teaching them a new religion. On the other hand, my people go down from here, look in vain for what they have learned, and become lax and indifferent for want of the help they need. And the future looms with danger. Even now they are beginning to read, and to get magazines from both points of view in the Church of England, or, even as one boy of mine recently, papers by Anglican divines impugning the Lord's Divinity and historic Resurrection and Ascension. And it is I who have steered them into these troubled waters rather than into the harbour of the Peace of God.

So, you see, although I am sad deep down at leaving those who have taught me so much and who have reposed in me faith and love, still, in a way, I am so glad to be leaving a false position that all this is swallowed up. How different it would have been if I had been able single-heartedly to throw myself into this work, knowing that I was building on a rock ! I cannot but envy the priests of the Roman Mission here. When a man falls in that Mission, he can die gladly, for he knows another will step into his place to work with the same end in view and to teach the same things. He knows he is part of a world-wide Church in which heresy is ruthlessly suppressed. His sheep may fall victims to the wolves, but it will be their own fault. There are none in the fold, nor can wolves enter.

As I write that, I do indeed grow sad. If only life had been different ! if only I had seen clearer years ago ! if only I had not been afraid ! But regrets are useless, and besides I do not think I am of the stuff of which such priests are made. Of all heroisms I know none to excel theirs. Faith is, of course, their shield and anchor ; but for all that it means much to give one's life to these rugged mountains, to spend the years tending these people, who, with all the glimpses of vision that they give you, are still

stiff-necked, hard to understand, difficult to befriend. These shepherds have left home, wife, children, fatherland, the joy of art and study, the rewards of men, even the joy of seeing much accomplished, the joy of raising a memorial in the earth. They are content, like their people, to live a while on the Berg's face and die, letting their dust scatter to the winds, unknowing and unknown. I am not cut out for that. Could I, for example, have left the thought of you?

The thought of you! Yet have I truly won you? And I go out now, alone, to what? I do not know. The Roman Church seems no mother to me, holding out tender arms, and I am not drawn, as they say converts are drawn, by the beauty and art of her churches and ritual. If I go to her, it will be because I must save my soul and I cannot find my Lord elsewhere. Yet as I write it is not the face of that age-long Church and Mistress that is before me, but rather yours, that I see as so dear, so very lovely, so tender in your love. Must I surrender you?

Oh, my dear, my dear, there is a cloud over the face of the moon, and the wind is stirring mournfully among the mountain grasses, and the night grows chill.

XXII

OF THE COST OF MISSIONS

WILL you read a letter that is one sustained "grouse"? I rather want you to do so for a reason that I gave you the other day, when I said that I always feared, in writing and speaking about missions, the painting of a too golden, one-sided picture. Here and now I propose to expose to you the other side as it was shown to me in a happening begun when last I was in this village, and concluded last night.

It was at a place of which I am rather fond, where a chief is building a church for us himself, and in which we have a score of Christians. The head of the little Christian community is a fellow with an Old Testament name whom I will call Hezekiah, for his real name is no better. Hezekiah, then, is a fairly wealthy man in flocks and herds, and he has many huts, and in one of them I have ever been used to stay. Several times have I come, at the close of a hot long day, and been very glad of my reception. A hut has been swept for me, milk and bread and sometimes meat seemingly freely offered, and I have felt myself among friends. When first I came to

the Berg, I was told by an old priest of Hezekiah that he had been baptised as a child, and might be looked upon as the "elder" of that little Church. When I met him, I found at once that he was very ignorant, but I heard that he "took prayers," and I did not conceive that he had any pretensions to be more than a Christian farmer.

Well, at our last visit, then, after prayers and supper, came the shock. Hezekiah said he wanted to speak to me, and on coming in it was plain that the veneer had been stripped off. He began by saying that he had come for his money. Utterly mystified, I asked, "What money?" The money for his work these many years as a catechist, he said. I replied that I had no idea that he was a catechist; where had he been trained? who had appointed him? still more, what had he done?

That opened the floodgate. He named the old priest, who used before my time to make very occasional visits here, and he said he had been appointed catechist by him; that ever since he had worked for the Mission, teaching and praying; that we had come many times now, sleeping under his roof and eating his food; and that he was tired of waiting and doing all this for nothing at all. And now he heard I was sending a new catechist . . .

I am glad I kept my temper. I asked for the registers of his classes ; he had none. I pointed out that there were practically no heathen under instruction here, and that that was why I was sending a catechist, recently trained at college. I said I had never been told of his appointment or that any salary had been promised him, but that I would write to the old priest and inquire. And finally I apologised for eating food which I had thought a gift, and I asked how much I owed him for it.

In the months that followed I got at the truth. The old priest told me, astonished, that he had never called him catechist or made an appointment, still less named a salary, but that he had asked him, as a man who could read, to say Sunday prayers. Hezekiah had begged cassock and surplice, and had been in the habit of monotoning a mutilated version of Morning Prayer on " g " on and off ever since. He had never taught or wanted to teach. He was the big man in that black and white church dress, and the collects monotoned on " g " had been the beginning and the end of his missionary labours. Gradually the idea had dawned that " The Mission " ought to pay him. And now it had all come out.

Last night I called him in, and did my best to

put it right. I spoke of the duty every Christian man owed to God. I told him that none of us were "paid" for religion, and that even we priests were only given a living wage, not as a wage, but as a means to live and devote our whole time to God's service. I urged that, as a matter of fact, simple prayers and simple instructions would help people nearer to God than the sort of thing he had been doing. And—well, with the best intentions, I only poured oil on the fire. He was very rude. When he had gone, I gave way to despair, for he had shown me how a mission can fail.

It is our failure. Cassocks and surplices and monotoned prayers—oh, shades of Pusey and Keble, these can be the sepulchres of true religion! I feel like a Puritan and a Nonconformist when I think of the folly of allowing ignorant natives to dress up and recite Matins. Then I feel a Roman Catholic when I think how badly we fail to show what the Church of God really is. To them a nightmare of imagination, called The Mission, run by rich white priests (*why* I don't think they know), is the Church, or else it's "Charch," as they hideously say, our agency, like that of the Mafora (or French Protestants) or the Ba-Roma (or Roman Catholics), for Europeanising the country. The

idea of its being the Ark of Salvation, the Kingdom of the Poor Thorn-crowned King in which it is an honour to serve for nothing with all one's earthly goods and powers—*that* is far from the generality of our converts. So have I catechists who will not stir five miles without "the Mission" finding them a horse, or use anything of their own in the service unless it is paid for.

Poor Hezekiah! What have we done for him these twenty years? Alas! nothing, I fear. His dull black mind is not really enlightened at all. His blind eyes have seen no vision. All his praying and all his dressing up has not once carried him to the threshold of that other world where one falls on one's face as one dead. The Gospel has not really reached him at all. His religion, like his name, is none other than that of the Kings of Israel and Judah, and it seems he even lacks their zeal. He cannot be placed among the Beatitudes at all, and if he has mastered the Ten Commandments, of what good are they? "Master, all these have I kept from my youth up. . . . But one thing thou lackest. . . ." Hezekiah has not learned the initial lessons of Christ—Love and Sacrifice.

Maybe I have not said enough to make you see that this is really a true picture. If so, I can only ask you to believe that I would not exag-

gerate it. Maybe you think I ought not to write so of any of our people, and that in any case he is no worse than many Europeans. But what is the use of *always* keeping silence, and, besides, is it any excuse to compare him with our own pagan white folk, to whom the Christ is no more than a shadow in history? What is the use of hiding it? This is where Missions fail.

Hardly ever would I dole out cassocks and surplices if I had my way, hardly ever would I give practically untrained men the Book of Common Prayer, and never, I think, would I teach them to read its prayers. Nor would I build them churches; nor, as soon as there were any number of Christians, would I pay their priests; nor, as a priest, would I ever arrive at a village with money or food or horses of my own.

What do you think of all this? The dream of a visionary? Perhaps, but can you dispute the dream with me? Is not the Kingdom within you? Does it not lie in love and reality and sacrifice? Is not the church of mud and reed, erected by the people themselves because they want to build a house to which God may come in His Sacrament, better than any stone and iron building built for them by Europeans? It seems to me that the whole essence of Christianity lies in the life within. That must spring

of itself and grow and bring forth fruit of architecture and ritual and service as well as of transformed lives. It did so in Europe, and it must do so in Africa. Augustine came barefoot from the glories of Rome, and the first church in Canterbury was a lowly Saxon building of mud and thatch.

So with the priest, too. True, the Seventy were sent out with purse and staff, but still they were to abide only where welcomed and eat what was freely given them. So soon as the Church in any place was formed and needed its whole-time minister the labourer was worthy of his hire. A white man hired by natives! Even so. It was God Himself who said: "I am among you as He that serveth."

My dear, we mix up Christianity and Education, Christianity and Civilisation, even Christianity and shirts and trousers. People say one must, but it is a lie. I have been a missionary all my days, though they may be few, and, thank God, I have never taught any one to wear trousers! But I have laboured all my time with a load on my back, for people would think of me as interested in schools or as a white man or as a Europeanising agency. But the truth is that you do not make a man a Christian by teaching him to read the Bible, or by showing him how to

dress, or even by making roads through his country and giving him police. All is subservient to this : that you awake his soul to see God. Offer him the simple sacramental religion of Jesus Christ. He may refuse it, but that is not your business. He may accept it ; then let the rest follow. And if he accepts it, he himself will give of the best he has in labour, gifts, and love, to build his own church and to feed and cherish his own priest. These are the two last things of which poor Hezekiah thinks, and no wonder, for I do not believe he has ever seen what Christianity really is. A native priest wrote the other day publicly that Christianity was Education and Good Manners, and I do not even blame him much, for I fear we have taught him so.

Possibly, having got so far, you will still have enough toleration left to ask what I would suggest. Practically I believe the answer is a very simple one : the work of Missions should primarily be the work of religious orders, and, just as when a man proposed to build a tower, the work of Missions ought not to be attempted unless the cost has first been considered. Nor is the cost to be reckoned in £ s. d. Raymond Lull reckoned better when he worked out the sum in blood and tears. Christ's gospel can only

be preached by Christ's men. Father Lemans, with £20 a year, carried from place to place by his people and fed by them, never dispensing surplices and cassocks and never asking his converts to recite the Breviary at one another, is doing something. Very likely he has his Hezekiahs: I should not be surprised; St. Peter had his Ananias and Sapphira and his Simon Magus. But Father Lemans, like St. Peter, is under no delusions in regard to them, and, alas! we are.

There you are . . .

That is an honest grouse! But now I am going to say the General Confession in the first person singular and go to bed.

XXIII

OF A MOUNT OF TEMPTATION

SUPPOSE I write you a genuine but old-fashioned missionary story in the best missionary society meeting style! I can do so, for one such has just been truly enacted with your humble servant somewhat prominently in the cast. It may interest you, so here goes! And wasn't my last letter a horrid grouse? Here is the corrective.

There is a chief—we will call him Motseke—who has asked me several times, personally, and by messenger, to come to his village, and twice I have tried to visit him. But he has been always so delightfully vague as to the whereabouts of his "place," like most mountain natives, who make no account of half a day's ride in one direction or another, that I have never been able to find him. Last winter I delayed a day looking for him and found him not, but merely a heavy snowstorm instead. However, this time, seeing I have days in some sort to spare on the Berg now, I set out with definite intent.

I knew he was on a certain river, and I deter-

mined to follow its course till I found him. The map marked no road and no villages, but that was a little matter, for the map was made some ten years ago, and everybody, except the people who want the Berg for the white man, knows how rapidly the native population is growing and filling it. We set out, therefore, at dawn one day, from a fixed point; and we determined to follow the river until we reached another fixed and known point, for Motseke must live between the two. There was a road of sorts, but such a road! The river, called "The Twister" in the native, does indeed wind and twist, and the tiny trail wound with it round the mountains through which the Twister has cut its way these ages since. There is nothing more tiring than such a road. You come to a great fissure in the mountain, and across it, going round the bend to a second fissure, you see your trail. It is perhaps a few hundred yards away. Yet you must follow the trail right up the fissure, cross the inevitable little trickle running down it, and wind wearily round the precipice of the other side. Anything up to an hour of hard, stony work will bring you at last to the point you saw.

For the best part of a day we travelled so, and then we cut up between two peaks on to a tableland that was rich in grass and cattle. Things

looked promising, for the herdmen nodded sagely at the name of Motseke. We crossed the pastures, and towards sunset the path fell away down a valley. We rode harder. Seven villages of dependants we passed, and in the dusk made the eighth, that stood on guard at the entrance to the valley. Cyril rode up and inquired, and turned and waved his hand. Motseke was found at last.

He came out, an agile, eager, hearty, but white-haired old man, and he all but ran to meet me. He seized my hands, and began to bellow to his people. So excitedly and fast he spoke that I hardly caught his words, but Cyril interjected translations : " A priest had come at last ! For seven years had he, Motseke, been seeking a priest to visit his village, and, lo ! none could be found. He had been to — and to — and to —, and then he had heard that I travelled in the mountains, and he had come to me. Ho ! ho ! ho ! A priest had come at last ! Now they would have a school and a church and a catechist. Had I not seen all the villages, all his herds ? and all were mine ! " And at that point he let go of my hands to gesticulate and shout to his men.

I told you what sort of a story this would be, and so you must have the local colour. There I

stood, in my dreadful, tattered old Norfolk jacket, my face peeled and burnt, my horses around drooping with fatigue. Before us was the semi-circle of huts on the hillside; below us the green valley, the great river, and the purple mountain barrier rising beyond. Stars were even then peeping in the paling sky, and it was very still. Smoke from dung fires rose perpendicularly in grey columns, and one caught the scent of it while the men came running at the old man's bidding with his gifts. They piled them at my feet. A sheep, a turkey, a couple of fowls, eggs, milk, *mafi*, a dish of raw potatoes and some beans—these were among the first offerings, and when they had done the old fellow reiterated that all he had was mine. He then asked for how long I would stay. "A month?" "No," I said, "that was impossible." "Well, two weeks, then?" I shook my head. "A week?" "No," said I; "I must leave the next morning," and so, much as I was grateful for his gifts, a few eggs, some milk, and a bowl of *mafi* were all that I wanted. Poor old fellow! It was really pathetic. He sat down on a big stone, and put his hands to his head. "For seven years," said he, "I have waited for a priest to come to my place, and when he comes he stays one night!" But I could not help it. I had already spent more time than I could afford. I

was due at the Mission, where people would be waiting for me, in two days, and I knew it would take all my time to get there.

I moved inside the *lelapa*, or semicircular fence of reeds which acts as a break-wind in front of the huts, and asked for water in which to wash. They brought me a big bowl of warm water, and I stripped to the waist and got down to it. In the middle of my ablutions the old chief came in, and immediately, to my confusion, called his wives and his people generally to watch. A small crowd gathered, and to them he made a speech something as follows :—

“ My people, see the priest of the Church ! Have I not always told you that we would have a priest of the Church here or no Church at all ? You know the native *baruti* ” (i.e., teachers) “ of —— ” (and he named another Mission). “ What do they do if they come here ? Do they wait for me to give them a sheep ? No ! They demand it. Do they kill and share it ? No ! They drive it before them to their own place. But this priest—of all our gifts he says, ‘ Give me but a little milk and a few eggs, and I am content ! Give me but a little water in which to wash, and I have all I need ! ’ Look at him now, O, my people ! See his white skin. His heart is as white as his skin ! Did I not say we should have

a priest of the Church or none? Did I not say well?"

(Chorus.) "Ah, thou saidest it! Thou saidest well!"

They gave me a hut, of course, and I dined off hard-boiled eggs, bread, *mafi* and jam, and tea; but then, before I turned in, I went outside. It was a night of almost full moon, and I climbed up a little behind the huts and sat on a rock to watch. The valley lay bathed in the misty light. If I listened hard enough, I could just hear the water of the river a long way off in the intense stillness. Small sounds, indeed, came up to me from the unseen huts of villages at a distance—the bark of a dog, the cry of a child, once the crow of a sleepy cock, that ended ludicrously as if the bird had fallen asleep again in the middle of it. So I sat and surveyed the native world, the whole valley all but unvisited, its villages unmarked on the map, unevangelised, and I thought of many things.

It did just enter my head to wonder for a moment if it might not be better for me to leave it as I found it, and build no school and no church. But I thought so only for a minute. My withdrawal would not mean that Western civilisation would not come, nor would it mean that the natives would cease to go to mine and store and

return with European treasures—and vices. Moreover, Christianity is not to me (as a gentleman in a smoke-room once put it) “a highly developed philosophy unsuited to the native even if he can in the least understand it.” To me it is the highway to God of which it is written that wayfaring men, though fools, cannot err therein ; it is the ark that floats above the waters of a surely drowning world.

And yet have I not already told you that I do intend to go away ? Well, my dear, that night I questioned that decision more intensely than I have done for any day these last two months. I think that moonlit valley side was my mount of temptation. It may sound extreme to you, but it seemed to me that these people were offered me if I would but fall down before the Tempter. “Sacrifice your conception of truth and right for the empire of these”—that is how it came to me. There was the appeal of their weakness, their eager welcome, their lovable-ness, and their need, and against it only that my religious system does not seem to me honest or true. But its truth and honesty is in grave dispute, and many hold that it has both ; moreover, it is so insidious a whisper that says : “ You, and you alone, will have to do with them. You can teach as you will and build as you will.

What does the Lambeth Conference or the Anglican attitude in England matter to you up here? For the sake of these poor souls, stay on!"

Then I remembered again the two missionaries returning to China at the time of the Boxer riots. Urged to avoid peril, one said: "I must return because of my sheep," but the other answered more quietly: "I must return because of the Shepherd." It is a strange paradox, but I, who would stay on account of the sheep, feel that I must go on account of the Shepherd. A man must be true to Christ first—true, at any rate, to what he cannot but feel for himself is involved by being true to Christ.

So in the end, if it be a conquest, I conquered. Being a modern, I knocked out the ashes of my pipe and went down the rocky hillside to bed, but, my dear, it was my boat and my nets that I left there, and the dead to bury their dead.

Next morning I did all I could do, up to the light I have to-day. I chose a site for a church; I settled details; I promised windows and door on the part of the Mission if they would build and roof—that is, I offered to do what they cannot do. And last, but far from least, I set up a little altar within that reed fence, and I offered the

Holy Sacrifice in the clear, sweet morning light in the presence of the one Christian woman, her half-dozen christened children, and at least a hundred heathen. To them I explained that I was making the greatest prayer to God on their behalf that could be made. If a man would gain his end of a chief, did he not bring sheep or ox? Who were we that God Almighty and All Holy should hear us? But we brought in this Prayer a Victim, and for His sake God would hear. And that Victim? None other than His Son, Who by a miracle would there, unseen but surely, change Bread and Wine into His living Self. And to God's Majesty I said in my secret heart: "Have Thou respect, O God, not to my weakness, my ignorance, my sin, but to the Sacred Victim on ten thousand Catholic altars this day throughout Thy world, with which I do at least will to be one."

As shortly after I lifted the Sacrifice in my hands for all to see, my upturned face caught the first rays of the sun, just risen high enough in the east to overtop that reed fence. Its splendour fell on the bowed and awed heathen group behind, and dazzled my poor eyes; and to me it seemed no less than a sign that while I was yet speaking He had heard.

.
“ We were campèd on the sand
By a fire so good to see
Under a tree so grand,
And the stars were over the tree.

“ That night aside the fire
Learn'd I my road to go—
In the joy of a God's Desire,
In the ruth of a Rood of woe.

“ A fire on a rock in the sand
Faith lit at dawn for me—
Under a Tree so grand,
With a Star yet over that Tree.”

Arthur Shearly Cripps.

XXIV

OF RELICS AND FRIENDS

NOT long ago I wrote you a letter in which I found myself talking to you about loneliness, and I want to go on and tell you something more that is in my heart to say. For to-day we rode five hours in the morning under a blistering sun, and when the midday off-saddle became a necessity, I told Cyril that I would find a spring of really cold water and some shade if I had to walk five miles for it. I should think I walked one mile at least anyhow. The water in the little open streams was warm, as it often is, for it flows shallow over the rocks with the sunlight on it all day; but one can nearly always find, high up above the stream, some little cool spring that leaps up in a bed of green straight from the bowels of the earth, to trickle down to the main current below. I not only found such an one, but one that sprang up in a tiny cave completely sheltered from the glare outside. The cave overlooked a wide deserted valley into which the brook ran, itself following a crevasse in the side of the hill that had an air of complete solitude. There were no huts near.

The grass was untrampled, the flowers un-gathered. The water plants grew rank and unbroken, and when I sat down and kept still, there was no sound at all but the trickle of the stream. It was intensely restful. I thought of Piccadilly Circus without the least envy—just then, at any rate! And it dawned on me that I really did not want at that moment even you!

Well, as I lay in the shade of that rock I went over in detail with satisfaction an orgy of destruction in which I indulged a few months ago. I had turned out then all my old letters and papers and photographs and treasures, and destroyed them ruthlessly. I barely kept one. There were letters from my people and my friends, and letters from the great men (to me) that I once knew—letters of congratulation, advice, criticism; letters from several parts of the world about my books; letters on being ordained, on leaving my first curacy, on coming out to South Africa; and so on. There were photographs of boyish holidays, of Cambridge, of my first parish—and all were destroyed. There were poems and essays and short stories. How queer it is to read what one thought splendid and treasured years ago! All went. There were old diaries and some faded flowers and some quaint relics, and I burnt them all. At first

I thought I would save a few—this letter for its signature, that for its contents ; this photograph for its sentiment and that because the subject of it is a big person to-day ; but they all went into the fire in the end. Or at least I will be quite honest : I kept what would pack into a small pocket case, but that was all. When I had finished I felt free to go.

Why does one keep these things, do you suppose ? I expect you have often read the biography of some bishop or statesman, and rather wondered at the host of relics there seemed to be of him when he came to die. I have, at any rate. As one reads one sees the man gathering things about him consciously and unconsciously, not only possessions, but the accumulation of years, little, worthless relics that he and others treasured. This one, when they come to write his life, tells a tale of the nursery, and that records an incident of school life. Here is a letter in which one can read what the Prime Minister said to him when he became a bishop, and here another telling us what he said to the Prime Minister. It flows on almost endlessly, but of course there is an end. And at last you have the two-volume biography at half a guinea a volume, pre-war price !

Now do not be a beast and say either of the

things you are thinking ! To begin with, these are not sour grapes. I am not running down such people's biographies because mine is not likely to be written ; indeed, I am not running down such biographies at all. I find them curious and interesting ; very human, if a little perplexing. *And* I did not destroy papers and letters because it would not have done to have had them read ! No, I destroyed them for an entirely personal reason, for a reason which I herein intend to set out before your Worship, and which I thought out all over again at our midday halt to-day.

It seems to me, then, that the mind of man, designed to be his servant, is an extremely subtle and dangerous servant. If a man does not take care, his mind runs away with him before he knows it, and that in all kinds of ways, not the least the way in which a person becomes persuaded to accumulate possessions, and particularly what I have called relics. We say : " I can't destroy that : it reminds me of So-and-so—such a person, such a holiday, such a place." We say (chiefly to ourselves) : " Oh, I'll keep that letter : it will cheer me up one day to see that So-and-so appreciated my work." And so the relics gather till a man has sacks of them, drawers full, boxes full, desks full, until, indeed, a man has no idea what hosts of such things he possesses,

and he cannot lay his hand on anything because he has so much.

But all that is great foolishness. It ties up the spirit. To begin with, it is no use looking back, and no use whatever trying to recapture the spirit of the past. The very confession that one wants to do so is the confession of a failure. Past things and people impressed us, and if there was any value in them, they left their impressions upon us. Those impressions went to the moulding of us, and we are what we are because of them. But eyes front ! What was moulded into you is yours, and what was not so moulded can never now truly be yours. It is waste of time and, what is worse, waste of sentiment to look back wistfully or regretfully or even happily. The past is past except so much of it as was assimilated by you and so carried on to the present.

Then the half of that looking back is vanity. I, for example, hated to destroy my old stories and verses. Truth to tell, I felt tender towards them and still half believed in them. But no, they are not really of any value ; if I could write then, I could write better to-day. Let us have some test and destroy ruthlessly what does not come up to it. For myself, one sort of test is, I think, publication. If one has practically no name or reputation, no publishers will take work

unless they think it has merit. Of course a publisher may make a mistake either way, in the rejecting or the accepting, but it is a test, and given a reputable publisher and reasonable work, it is no bad one. As for those things of yesterday, that then one loved so much and set such store upon, into the fire with them ! Only a genius writes imperishable stuff at twenty-three, and even he will write it again and better at thirty-three.

As a matter of fact, that there are exceptions does no more than prove the rule, and it is no use legislating for oneself on the basis of a possible exception. Such case law is always bad law. Why worry with the dead of past years ? Let the dead bury their dead. The untrammelled spirit is likely to prove of more value than any litter of the past, and it seems to me that the spirit is trammelled by all this sort of thing. And it is so also with possessions. I think I would rather have access to some one else's garden than have one of my own ; I would rather the great pictures were in a gallery than in my house ; and I would rather be able to visit a palace than live in it. To have and to hold brings worries, or breeds a soporific satisfaction. Very often it does both. To possess, too, is very largely to be tied down. That is true of material

things in actual fact, and it is largely true of the spirit. Doubtless to have continually to fight for life and to have to wonder where the next suit or the next meal is coming from is just as bad, but at any rate that may breed the dauntless spirit. But it is not even a dauntless spirit that I want particularly. I want rather a whimsical, light-hearted, indifferent-to-things spirit, a spirit that takes the best from each moment and each experience, and then drops the husk of it and goes on. I want a spirit that, if creative, will be content to create and leave, leave for others to use if they want to do so, leave without a concern or a regret if others find no use for the work of one's brain. After all, for the creator creating is its own reward ; if others enjoy, their enjoyment may be allowed to gladden one for a moment or so, but it must not be allowed to satiate.

All this is so true about one's friends. A friendship that requires a correspondence to keep it up is worthless, as worthless as a love that requires the contemplation of relics for its stimulus. So long as there is gain in a friendship, exchange of ideas and intercourse will flow naturally from it ; but friendship must breed that exchange, and not require the exchange in order to exist. People say : " It is hard to keep up with one's friends ! " But I would say that the

moment one is conscious of having to strive to keep up with a friend, that is the moment in which that friendship becomes worthless. Do not, then, put it in a drawer and make an effort to pull it out now and again and look at it. You and I, swung across each other's track by the whirl of life, exchange glances and instinctively hold out hand to hand. And it is very, very good that it should be so. Hand in hand you and I press forward together, and, my dear, it is more than happy, this friendship of ours, is it not? But if the whirl inexorably swing us apart, or if that hand-clasp of ours should cease to be the clasp of mutual help and assent and become a tie which holds either of us back, why, then God help us to part with a smile, and God keep us from looking behind. We shall have had our day; its best, for as much as it was best, we shall carry always in our hearts; for to-morrow we have always to live.

No, the world is very full of fair things and good comrades. There is the unimprisonable beauty of its mountains and forests and seas and plains, and there is the marvellous beauty of the works of its children in the days gone by. And always there are the sun and the rain and the wind for to-day. I would tramp gaily through it, then, yes, tramp through it in spirit though

I live out my days in one village, remembering that all the good is mine to take, and mine to keep always provided I give it all away. The joy of the morning song of the birds is mine always; the joy of the dew-dusted flowers is mine always; the joy of the canvases of the great artists, of the buildings of the great Faith, of the laughter and bravery of humanity, all mine always, so long as I do not try to grasp and store my treasure, but speak of it, write of it, live in the strength of it, and create through the love of it. And when I come to lay down my stick and traveller's knapsack for the last time, I would that there should be nothing more of mine to dispose of, nor any treasure other than that which the souls that God, of His goodness, has given me have taken to themselves long since.

You remember Francis Thompson's end, and how there was nothing left but his published works, and a small box of odds and ends containing old pens that would not write, a broken pocket-knife, a few bits of string, some unopened letters—a pathetic little collection, they said. But I like that, especially the unopened letters, for a letter opens itself, or else it is not worth opening. And the other day I came across an all but forgotten poem on another poet, a few verses that carry with them that wonderful

quality of real poetry that cannot be explained but that goes straight to the heart. They have gone straight to my heart, and I believe that they will go straight to yours. If they could be a little true of me, I would be very glad. Here they are :—

“ He came to the desert of London Town,
Grey miles long ;
He wandered up and he wandered down,
Singing a quiet song.

“ He came to the desert of London Town,
Mirk miles broad ;
He wandered up and he wandered down,
Ever alone with God.

“ There were thousands and thousands of human kind
In this desert of brick and stone ;
But some were deaf, and some were blind,
And he was there alone.

“ At last the good hour came ; he died,
As he had lived, alone ;
He was not miss'd from the desert wide :
Perhaps he was found at the Throne.”

XXV

OF CONCLUSIONS

SO you think my letters are a strange mixture, and you want to know what I really *do* think about things! I can forgive you the first statement, because I suppose they really are a mixture. But why not? I never could see that it was a just view of life that kept religion in one watertight compartment, love in another, business in a third, and so on. Everything is part of a whole, as God made it, and the other is an artificial arrangement for which I have no use. If I cannot love and enjoy all the more intensely because I believe, then there is something wrong with my belief. That is one of the things I think, anyway, my dear; and, for the rest, I am really engaged in trying to find that highway through life in which the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err. It has been promised, and I believe it to be there. Up here, high on the Berg, I think one has a chance to descry it.

But your demand for something like a clear statement interests me. After all, my time is nearly up here, and perhaps it is time I made you

one, time, too, that I made myself one, since soon I shall be down from the Berg and back in the rush and confusion.

Very well, then : I think there are just two problems in life. The first is the adjustment of Nature and Religion, and the second is the discovery of the true Religion. Possibly I have not said much about the first, but it undoubtedly stands first. It is always in my mind as I ride about on the face of this old Berg, and I fail to see how it can help being there, since one is so close to Nature up here. Among the flowers and mountains under the sun and the stars, and dealing with natives, one is truly close to Nature, and I am bound to confess that I find Nature a great problem. I can see law and impulse and purpose in Nature, but all I see perplexes me enormously. On the one hand, my mind—such as it is—cannot get away from the belief that Nature is God's business, but, on the other hand, it seems to me a strange business for God to be mixed up in. For example, the other day I rode with a good fellow who made certain enthusiastic observations as to design in the world. We had been watching dung-beetles, and he said that when he considered the wonderful scavenger system of Nature—beetles, rats, flies, and so on—and the wonderful balance of things,

he saw God's hand in it all. I assented—cautiously. I, too, see a wonderful system; I, too, utterly fail to be able to think that a purpose and a system can grow out of nothing without a mind behind, that a blind force could come into existence blindly and produce a world. But if a Mind designed this world, it seems to me to be a Mind as much interested in the well-being of a typhus bacillus as in man. Flies, for example—they clean up dirt, but the diseases they spread have slain more men than all the wars. Why? Because Nature is just as interested in finding a suitable home for a microbe and breeding him as she is in doing the same for man. We are all part of a system, yes, but of a ravening, heartless colossal system, in which *life* matters, and not man.

So I come to it that man is an animal; that his passions and impulses are really his law; that conventions and human arrangements ought to be broad-based on Nature, unless you can produce some other and stronger authority. Given that, of course our systems ought to be based on that authority. They ought not to try to ride two horses at once, as I think they do. But let us set that problematical authority aside for a moment. Then a certain programme presents itself.

Take, for example, the big sexual questions. Nature is out to breed men—and microbes—as hard as she can. She has designed the sexes to attract each other, and love is really her little joke. Man, however, is the one animal that has really learned the art of combination, and he is putting up a struggle, not merely for existence, but for a very big place in the sun. He is going to do his best to check Nature in the matter of microbes and to develop Nature in the matter of himself. The State at present is our biggest human organisation, and when I think of the State and Nature, it seems to me that I see a social and sexual programme to which, maybe, we are coming, but coming all too slowly. The State ought to breed children, without a doubt. It ought to encourage the sexual union of the fittest, and see that if the non-fit take that for which their nature craves, everything is done that can be done to prevent the natural disastrous consequences. Surely that is the merest common-sense. Moreover, education has made man and woman equals, and the State ought to allow for that. In a word, I can see nothing for it logically, on this hypothesis, but Eugenics, a very advanced Communism, the wholesale introduction of the easiest possible Divorce system, and so on. So, and only so, can man on the earth

hope to win out against his fellow-creatures, and direct Nature to his own ends.

But is this all? Well, on the face of the Berg I realise as never before that men have souls, even black men, slaves to Nature though they be. And I realise that this visible world is only a tiny matter in comparison with the invisible that touches us at every turn. The whole of it, Nature and all its laws, is but the garment of something else. I am more sure of these things than of anything else. Maybe I am a colossal fool, but honestly, as I look out over these mountains, I see the spiritual a thousand times more clearly than the material. A flower dumbfounds me, for although I see the flower, I see far more plainly God.

To me, then, you see, cutting right across Nature and her ravaging laws, comes the expectation of what I shall call Grace. By that I mean the expectation of something which will lift us out of this world of apparently ceaseless and aimless becoming, something which will be the authority of the soul, something which the God Who designed Nature has also designed by which we may win free in the end from this ravaging old world, transmuting the baser metals as we do so. And to fit the expectation comes the Catholic Vision, as I shall call it.

You cannot prove that a flower is beautiful, and you do not want a proof. Just so, this Catholic Vision appeals to me, arrests me, dominates me, without a proof, though I do not say there are no proofs. To me the story of Bethlehem is so penetratingly, wonderfully beautiful that I cannot think of it without tears. God in a human mother's arms, and in such a mother's, and in such a wise—the idea is more lovely than the morning star, more masterful than the sun at noon. From it the Catholic scheme flows as sweetly and as naturally as a brook from a spring. Such union of the human and Divine would inevitably lead to the formation of a human and Divine society like the Catholic Church. Her idea of the Sacraments is no more and no less than Nature shot through by Grace, and every hillside on the face of the Berg shouts to me of the reasonableness and likelihood of it. Her dogmas do not seem to me dogmas at all, but the most obvious statements of the inevitable. Take one such, and we will take one of the most disputed—the Immaculate Conception. Good heavens! Could I believe Almighty God to design to be born of a woman, and to think nothing, before or after, of the woman? Would He not have prepared His mother like “a garden enclosed”? And as to

the method, why it is so natural, so simple, so beautiful, that it appeals to me, again, as the flower appeals, and requires exactly the same "proof"!

"Go humbly . . . it has hailed and snowed . . .
With voices low and lanterns lit ;
So very simple is the road,
That we may stray from it."

I can see, then, with what authority such a vision ought to speak in the affairs of men. The Catholic Church might well dictate a marriage and sexual law, based not on man as an animal and Nature, but on man as a soul and Grace. And if Parliaments of States sat truly beneath the symbol of the Incarnation, of Bethlehem, their duty would be simple enough, and their authority real. Man might listen if their laws were based on this.

But I told you my second problem. I see a Catholic Vision, but has it existence in fact? St. John saw the New Jerusalem descending to earth as a bride adorned for her husband, but is the New Jerusalem still in the clouds? Plainly enough do I see the Vision; plainly enough do I see the ornaments of the bride; plainly do I see that she is fit for her Husband; plainly, to leave parables, do I see that Catholicity might make Man ready for God. But, I

ask myself doubtfully, has that Vision substance on earth? Have our dreams come true?

I was born, as you know, in the Protestant religion. It is a hateful thing to write anything against what others hold dear, but all I can say is that in Protestantism I see no possible realisation of this Vision. In its many forms I see only human ideas, full of the faults of the centuries that gave them birth, irrational, illogical, and often unnatural. No form of Protestantism can hold me any longer. If that were all, I should write to you as a reverent agnostic, and I would fling myself and such energies as I possess into such social schemes as it seems to me are best in our human conflict with Nature. On such schemes I have already touched. I should be one of those on account of whose doings one might well conceive our good fathers to turn in their graves. And so far as I am concerned, they may turn yet.

But not just yet. I passed, partly as a result of environment, from Protestantism pure and simple to that very perplexing form of religion known popularly as High Church Anglicanism. As a minister of that religion I came to the Berg, and most of my letters have been concerned with my doings in connection with it. And what shall I say of it? Nothing harsh, I hope, for the

faith of Pusey and Keble has given me great moments, and in their company at times I had all but thought that I saw the city of God on earth. Even now, it is hard to turn away from the hope they held out. With all its difficulties and anachronisms and unrealities, there is a life, it seems to me, in this form of religion, and a beauty that shall ever, I pray God, make me tender towards the friends of the past years. But I have made up my mind on the Berg that it is not the true Vision that floats before our eyes, but a mirage, only to be glimpsed at times and never to be reached. To have stumbled towards it across the arid sands is all part of the discipline of life, but there is only one thing for a traveller to do when he realises that a mirage is but a mirage. if he would have hope of life. He must turn his back upon it.

To you, friend and more than friend, I have written of these things. It helps to write to a friend. To you, who say that you have learned of me, and who therefore have a right to it, I have made this apologia, poor thing though it be. What it may mean to us both, who can say? It is a hard and cruel old world, as a friend of mine says, half in ridicule, but we have to live in it. It may hold nothing for either of us, but I love its many beauties, its tangled problems,

and its bewildered children, and am very conscious that, whatever God there be, a sword is set in the hand of each of us. To keep the blade untarnished and to do some work with it, is the most for which any man can hope. Nor do I think that that Vision is ever likely to pass from my eyes, or you from my thoughts, and, for weal or woe, I am very glad of both.

XXVI

OF THE RAINBOW'S END

I THOUGHT that I had written my last letter to you from the Berg, my dear, but so lovely and wonderful a thing happened this morning that I must write again, even although I am not now upon the Berg at all. It came about in this way.

You will remember that I have written to you several times of the wonderful cloud scenery along the border, how one is often above the clouds in the sun while they wash around the mighty summits of this huge and rocky barrier. Well, last night I slept for the last time up here. I should have liked that my last night had been spent under the stars round a camp fire and far from any one, but that could not be, and I slept at the store that stands just at this "gate" down to the plains below. From the stoep one could shoot an arrow across the border and out into the void, where it would fall several thousand feet, most likely, before it struck the lower and more gradually sloping face of the Berg.

In the morning I woke early and got up at once for a last early morning up here. I went out, and then I stood transfixed. Often as I have seen it, the beauty of the mist to-day almost made me hold my breath. The still

white sea rolled up nearly to my feet ; indeed, in a minute I walked to where it did lap my feet. To the horizon ahead it stretched, a tossed, tumbled, breaking, but all unmoving ocean of cloud. As I had seen before, so now it gathered about the krantzes like foam on the edge of the ocean ; cloud spray dashed up against the rocks, cloud spume running up the fissures. You really cannot picture its beauty. For the glorious sun shone on it all, warm and bright in the early morning, and about me birds twittered, and the green lands on our side rolled down to a little stream and up beyond to the still higher peaks.

So much I had seen before, but this morning I did a new thing. I stepped down into the sea. Very cautiously I climbed down the steep, precipitous descent, until, in a few moments, I was submerged. I felt like a sea-king in the "Arabian Nights" returning to his home. Literally, one moment my head was out of the "water," and the next I could not see a dozen yards for clinging, wet, vapoury cloud. But I climbed on down, and then, after a very few minutes as it seemed to me, I emerged below that ocean. And I just sat down and gasped with astonishment.

Far, far below lay another world. It was dullish and grey, but I could see stunted trees and huts and cattle and even tiny tots of

horsemen. Just above my head, so near that I could lift my hand and touch it, was the sky of that world. It stretched to the horizon before me, a proper cloudy sky, but it reached to my hand where I sat. I stood up, held up my hands, and leaned a little forward over the world below. I was Atlas, holding up the sky.

I remember I laughed, and my laugh seemed to be blanketed in the sky that I was touching. I laughed because it was a fairy story come quite true. Why, as a child, how often I have wanted to go far, far out and touch the sky, and how often to find the rainbow's end! As I grew up they told me it could not be done. I suppose they thought it could not quite honestly. But I had done it; I had wandered many years and very far first; but I had done it at last. I felt like a god; I really did.

Then I sat down again and thought. Down below the folk were getting up. Women were coming to their doors, and looking up at the sky far above them, and grumbling a bit because there was no sun again. Little children were waking up, and staring at the sky, and wondering what in the world was beyond it, and asking questions, and being told maddening things that they really could not believe. And there was I, sitting in their sky, looking down upon them.

I grew afraid as I looked at that dull world. It seemed so complete, so shut in, so normal, as I stared out at it, that I began really to wonder if I was shut down there for ever, and if I should never see the smiling sun and my horses and Cyril and the good pasture lands again. So I turned and climbed quickly up and poked my head out once more.

Coming back like that, the world above looked more beautiful than ever, and so shining and warm. I stretched my hands out to the sun, and grasped it. I picked a bunch of little wild flowers.

You will not think me foolish, dear, will you? It did happen just exactly like that; I have not exaggerated one bit. It is all over and past now, that wonderful morning hour, but I think God must have given me such a last vision out of the very bottom of His kind Heart. For more is over than the morning, as you will know from my letters, and I am indeed down from the Berg, exiled, a wanderer, in a strange country. But—is it not strange?—you remember my first letter, a quite honest and frank first letter, in which we talked of travel and I told you that at the journey's end I believed one would always find a friend? Well, of course, I know now. I know what is beyond the lowering grey clouds, and I do not think they will ever daunt me more.

The way may be long, and it may be wearisome, but I shall walk as one who has seen. For beyond the sky of our silly human seeing is a fair, smiling land to which we shall come hand in hand one day. You may be surprised, but I shall not be, when we look round and see how sweet and familiar it all is. "Why," you will say, "This is the very land we loved in our dreams when it seemed impossible that the least of them should come true!" And we shall stretch our hands out in the warm sunshine and grasp it and laugh at each other. And we shall wander over the green turf towards the clear water, and I promise you we will pick a bunch of the white and blue and gold and crimson flowers at the rainbow's end.

Down below the folk will be waking, and the children getting out of bed and running to the window, and (just as we used to do) they will ask what is up there. The grown-ups will say, "Heaven, dear!"

"And what is Heaven like, Mummy?" one will ask, and Mummy will say, you can be very sure, for years and years and years to come, "Oh, I don't know, child. Don't ask so many questions!"



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